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DECEMBER 1962

Commentary

RESPONSES AND REACTIONS
A NEW BI-MONTHLY DEPARTMENT
Norman Mailer

THE TELEVISION PROBLEM
Richard Schickel

AN APPOINTMENT WITH HATE
Elie Wiesel

EUROPE, DE GAULLE, AND THE DETERRENT
Ronald Steel

INTEGRATION AND THE NEGRO MOOD
Harold R. Isaacs

A NOTE ON CHIVALRY—A Story
Meyer Liben

The Study of Man

Bennett M. Berger:
ON TALCOTT PARSONS

Observations

Nathan Glazer:
CUBA & THE PEACE MOVEMENT

Chanan Ayalti:
MOSCOW'S JEWS

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Commentary

DECEMBER 1962
NUMBER 6
VOLUME 34

The Television Problem	461	Richard Schickel
An Appointment with Hate	470	Elie Wiesel
Europe, De Gaulle & the Deterrent	477	Ronald Steel
Integration & the Negro Mood	487	Harold R. Isaacs
A Story A Note on Chivalry	498	Meyer Liben
Responses & Reactions	504	Norman Mailer
The Study of Man		
On Talcott Parsons	507	Bennett M. Berger
Observations		
Cuba & the Peace Movement	514	Nathan Glazer
Moscow's Jews	519	Chanan Ayalti
F. Scott Fitzgerald: Reveille at Taps	526	Ellen Moers
Letters from Readers	531	
Books in Review		
American Photographs, by Walker Evans	540	George P. Elliott
The Arab World Today, by Morroe Berger	543	Elie Kedourie
Mental Health in the Metropolis, by Leo Srole *et al.*	545	Edgar Z. Friedenberg
Diamond, by Brian Glanville; and Sol Myers, by Judah Stampfer	547	Jacob Sloan
Rocking the Boat, by Gore Vidal; The Age of Happy Problems, by Herbert Gold; A Radical's America, by Harvey Swados	549	F. W. Dupee

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THE TELEVISION PROBLEM

RICHARD SCHICKEL

NO BUSINESS institution in our history has ever found itself under such unrelenting and ferocious attack as television. Criticism of the industry, though centered in what is generally called the middle-brow community, nevertheless cuts across all social, economic, political, and intellectual divisions, forming a kind of unprecedented cultural popular front. Yet it would also seem that never have so many said so much to so little avail. Even the great assault triggered by the quiz show scandal of 1959 failed to effect any significant reforms, and today the basic structure of the television industry is still what it was at the beginning, when Milton Berle, the wrestling matches, the roller derby, and some old Cornel Wilde movies were its chief assets. The goal the industry set for itself, to become the most pervasive (and persuasive) medium of mass communications in the history of the world, also remains the same. In fact, it could be argued that the goal has been achieved, putting the industry in a position of unassailable strength, from which it is easy to beat back all forms of criticism.

But whatever the case may be, in the last year most of television's critics have fallen silent, apparently awed by the failure of their mass attacks. Desultory firing from their lines continues, but it is obvious that, temporarily at least, they are unable to mount a major new offensive. At the moment, their main tactic is to concentrate on propagandizing for educational television, hoping to make it a true alternative to the commercial variety, as FM broadcasting has become for a minority of serious radio listeners. Having succeeded in passing a law requiring that all new TV sets be equipped to receive ultra-high frequency signals, many of which will be allotted to educational ventures, the crusaders for better television believe that in a decade these separate facilities may become technically equal to those now pre-empted by the forces of commerce. Yet by their own account, even this would not solve the problem, for these very critics also believe that commercial television has the power to warp and corrupt the citizenry, rendering them incapable of response to anything better than the pap they are being currently fed. Nor is this the only difficulty: there is also the question of where the money for programming that is truly competitive with the network product will come from. Even assuming—on the analogy of little magazines—that enough money could be raised by some combination of subsidy and direct consumer support through pay TV, is there anything in the record so far compiled by the educational broadcasters to indicate that they would be able to use good facilities effectively? They so far have demonstrated little beyond a most annoyingly

RICHARD SCHICKEL's new book about Hollywood, *The Stars*, has just been published by Dial. Formerly an editor of *Show* and *Look*, he now devotes full time to his writing. His review of August Heckscher's *The Public Happiness* appeared in our October issue.

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superior attitude toward their viewers, to which the general quality of their programs does not entitle them.

The inability of the critics to answer such questions leads one to suspect that there is something wrong with the premises on which their proposals and wishes have been based. The only way out of the impasse, therefore, is to examine these premises with a view toward arriving at a new and possibly much more fruitful approach.

THE FIRST of these premises concerns the nature of television as an economic institution. Because the airwaves are in the hands of entrepreneurs whose overriding consideration is profit, the liberal critics of the industry have tried to represent its sins as no less subject to remedy by legislative and judicial means than any other case of malfeasance by big economic institutions. Now, it is indisputably true that considerations of the market place bear a huge share of the responsibility for television's intellectual poverty as well as its lack of artistic or even journalistic daring. But the trouble is that these sins are different in kind from, say, rate-gouging by a railroad. In the absence of a genuine consensus about criteria of judgment, on what legitimate basis could a body be set up to rule on the industry's performance? Even if it were possible to secure public agreement on criteria applying to art, education, or persuasive discourse, how could we be sure that the right people would be there to interpret these criteria? Would the likes of J. Donald Adams do better for us than J. Walter Thompson has done? In any event, television is so new and so revolutionary a medium that it defies the traditional categories. So far as we can tell from its intrinsic technological character and from the kind of appeal it exerts at its best, television is not equipped to satisfy the demands its critics have made of it. Thus, in addition to misinterpreting the nature of television as an economic institution, they have also misinterpreted it as a medium of information and entertainment.

Before going on to examine the inadequacies of the political approach to improving television (stemming from a mistaken conception of the social character of the industry), and the general wrongheadedness of such criticism as we have had of television's actual performance (stemming from a mistaken conception of the aesthetic character of the medium), it may be useful to speculate on why the crusaders have failed so dismally to formulate the problem in an accurate way. The answer, I think, is that, for a variety of reasons, television has become the focus of a large fund of reformist passion which has been unable to find any other outlet in recent years. As a peculiarly exposed aspect of the free enterprise system, television has drawn the fire of those elements of the liberal community who nostalgically long for the old, obvious, easy-to-attack capitalism. Business, having created a consumer economy which has had the effect of placing the masses under opiates, and having retreated behind a screen of adroit public relations, is nowadays hard to get at, at least in any exciting fashion. Television is easy to get at, and has therefore been burdened with all the sins of the economy in general—while the economic system itself, thanks to the existence of this diversionary target, has ironically been left largely uncriticized.

This effort to pin everything that is wrong with the quality of our society on television is especially evident in the way critics have tried to convert the entire medium into a vast social problem, susceptible to reform through public agitation leading ultimately to legislation. Television has been blamed for juvenile delinquency on the one hand, and the debasement of cultural standards on the other; for failing to create a truly enlightened electorate on the one hand, and for causing the corruption of the citizenry on the other. Actually, however, there is no proof that television presents, even in small, specific ways, threats to the health of the body politic of

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the type that can be ameliorated by social reform. Take the matter of its effect on children. The best study of this problem is *Television in the Lives of Our Children,* by Wilbur Schramm, Jack Lyle, and Edwin B. Parker.* It states:

> For *some* children, under *some* conditions, *some* television is harmful. For *other* children under the same conditions, or for the same children under *other* conditions, it may be beneficial. For *most* children, under *most* conditions, *most* television is probably neither particularly harmful nor particularly beneficial. [Italics theirs.]

It would be difficult to draw up any very meaningful legislation on the basis of such a finding. Proof of problem being lacking here, as in other areas, the reformer's chief psychological weapon, a clear-cut, urgent need, is denied to the advocates of political palliatives. Worse, since the only possible answer to such complaints as lack of balanced programming or an overabundance of violence is some form of government control or censorship, the networks are given, without cost or obligation, an enviable position—that of defending the constitutional guarantee of free expression. Here again, problems which are the responsibility of the system of society are pinned on the relatively frail body of television, which not only diverts attention from the main causes, but also serves ironically to buttress the industry's means of self-defense.

But perhaps the most serious consequence of burdening television with misplaced political passions is that it leaves us without the stimulus to build a criticism which could work toward the establishment of aesthetic, informational, and educational standards *uniquely applicable* to television. This means a criticism which would be alive to the possibilities of the medium in its own right rather than one that makes do with standards borrowed from other media. As the situation now stands, even those sponsors who wish to do something better than the average are discouraged from attempting programs that would challenge television *as* television. They are possessed by the certain knowledge that they will be automatically attacked or patronized for working within forms that have no prestige, and just as automatically praised for resting content with something that has achieved cultural cachet elsewhere.

BECAUSE ITS critics have turned to politics in the hope of reforming television, the industry has been balancing for a decade on that corruption-reform-corruption-reform seesaw that has been so familiar a feature of American history. The pattern is clear; once a year the networks head for Washington where, in one hearing room or another, the executives haul out charts that prove conclusively that 98 per cent of their time is spent in programming works of a culturally uplifting nature. Thereupon, a headline-seeking Congressman complains about a show he saw last week in which a cowboy was stomped to death. The TV executives counter with an oration in defense of free speech. And from the sidelines comes a chorus of dark warnings that the networks had better shape up or else.

Or else what? There is no body in the United States capable of regulating television. In past years it was an open secret that some members of the Federal Communications Commission were in cahoots with the owners of a number of local stations, whose licenses they had the power to revoke, or to whom they could refuse licenses for future broadcasting acquisitions. Commissioners and owners engaged in various little rituals, designed to reassure both themselves and the public that the outward semblance of regulation was being maintained. But in truth even if corruption had not been present, it would have been impossible for the FCC to "regulate" broadcasting in any significant way. Like most of the federal regulatory commissions, it is habitually kept on short rations by Congress. Its few monitoring fa-

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cilities are busy making sure that the signal of one station does not "drift" and thus interfere with another station. Even now, with corruption ended under the chairmanship of Newton Minow, the FCC lacks the resources to indulge in much random sampling of station performance; it confines itself mainly to acting on complaints, of which a fairly high number is required to bring about investigation of a station.

Yet even if the FCC were given an astronomical budget, it would be powerless to do anything about the networks, for the simple reason that the legislation under which it operates (passed in 1927 and revised in 1934) deals only with stations and is silent on network regulation. Unlicensed, the networks operate with no threat of revocation hanging over them. Thus, though the FCC provides a good forum from which Mr. Minow can chide and cajole the networks, he has no real authority over them. And neither he nor his predecessors have been able to obtain such authority from Congress. Which is, of course, why no network has ever been caught trying to bribe a commissioner. It would be a waste of time. All they have to do is be polite when the occasion demands.

Most of their politeness is thus naturally aimed at Congress, which has the power to give the FCC more power, or simply to direct specific legislation against specific abuses of the public's airwaves. It is when the corruption end of the seesaw dips most deeply that the Congressmen start bouncing up and down on the reform end, and it is then that network, advertising, and sponsor executives jostle one another most rudely in order to get at the hearing-room microphones to cry "*mea culpa*—and you too." Following such displays, the industry cheaply assuages both Congressional and public opinion by passing pious codes of good practice, assuring everyone that it is policing itself to a new shade of whiter-white, and even going to the trouble of cutting out the most violent violence and creating new shows for children and new public affairs programs. All these efforts are directed to only one end—the preservation of the present, nonregulated, status quo for the networks. Thus far, they have succeeded, and this season even *Time* (which for solid, economically determined reasons has been a steady and implacable critic of television) admitted that "the networks have largely removed from the weekly shows the only really objectionable elements they once displayed—miscellaneous sodomists, dope-addicted teen-agers . . . and so on." Reform having been accomplished, *Time* was ready to make a separate peace. "For critics of television," it said, "the time has come to lower the general standard. . . . TV fills too much time to be extraordinarily worthwhile in any but a small part of it, and this will never change."

This, however, says more about the limitations of reform politics in dealing with the problem of television than it does about the problem itself. *Time* states blandly that the current TV season reminds it of "a great bowl of mentholated cornflakes . . . but most of the corn is healthy, the humor and situations are pugnaciously wholesome. . . . The new material is pretty fair; and if some of it is just no good, it is at least not bad."

It is just here that we reach the nub of the inadequacies of the political reformist approach to television. Having concentrated on solving what he sees only as a social problem, the political reformer completely ignores the question of how excellence can be achieved within the special limitations, and through exploiting the special virtues, of the medium. Thanks to public pressure, what were widely regarded as the industry's most egregious errors of commission have been eliminated, and even some of the sins of omission seem on the way to being rectified. But the quality of a good deal of network television remains the same: it is mostly boring and silly, beneath the attention of a reasonably cultivated citizen, even one who is only in

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search of good entertainment rather than enlightenment. On this point the political reformer has nothing to say.

More surprisingly, however, the aesthetic reformers have had almost as little to say. Because they have refused to consider realistically what television can do and what it cannot, they have vacillated between asking for the impossible and accepting that which need not be. But in order to define the limits and therefore the possibilities of television, we must first examine the nature of its relation to its audience, the cultural tradition of which it is a part, and then the technical nature of the machine itself.

NEARLY EVERY survey indicates that the average viewer is convinced he would like to see more good drama and music, more public affairs and information shows on television. They also indicate that he could do without quite so many Western, crime, and comedy shows. But this profession of cultural aspiration is really only for the benefit of the interviewers. For there is another set of surveys which show that the average man is not taking advantage even of the "serious" programs now being offered.

This contradictory portrait of the viewer appears to lend substance to the flimsy argument of television's apologists, which is that they are only giving the public what it wants and that the moment the public indicates that it wants something different, the industry will immediately respond. But, of course, those who control television are not at all giving the public what it *wants*. It wants culture. What they are actually giving it is what it compulsively *needs*. And what it needs is often in conflict with its cultural aspirations.

Here it might be well to return briefly to Schramm, *et al.* Children, they say, are not passive victims in their relation to television. "It is children who are most active in this relationship. . . . It is they who use television, rather than television that uses them. . . . A child comes to television seeking to satisfy some need. He finds something there, and uses it." What is true of the children also seems to be true of adults: this is a visceral medium before which we are all children. In one way or another, both the great bulk of television's routine programming and the particular types of consumer items that are advertised to support this programming offer ease for certain common anxieties. Chief among these items are male and female cosmetics (to enhance desirability); deodorants, mouth wash, and tooth paste (to insure that love will not be withheld for irrelevant reasons); cleaning preparations for the home (which, as an extension of the self, must also seem desirable, if not exactly lovable); all sorts of patent medicines (to avoid going around feeling lousy on top of everything else); cigarettes and beer (the poor man's tranquilizers, the best defenses against generalized anxiety). The products which serve basic physical needs—food (as opposed to breakfast cereals), clothing, shelter elements, forms of transportation other than autos (which have such heavy psychic overtones that they are well sold on television)—are rarely mentioned on what are ironically termed the "bread-and-butter" shows. These products are advertised, if at all, on well-publicized specials. Television, in short, is essentially the medium of the marginally affluent, those who want nirvana as much as anyone else but who can afford only such temporary and perhaps silly palliatives as can be purchased for fifty cents at the corner drugstore. The mink coat and Cadillac crowd is more effectively reached through selective media (see any issue of the *New Yorker*). TV seems to work best on those who can pay "a few pennies more" for the "new improved formula." And it works best by appealing to their anxieties and offering accessible remedies.

Similar things can be said of program content. Like radio and film before it, television is the heir of a tradition of escapist fantasy (of the idyllic, romantic,

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and violent varieties) which, for reasons too complicated to go into here, was banished from high culture a hundred years ago and which irrepressibly found its way into popular literature, and thence into the media of electrical transmission. Quite apart from the inherent technical limitations of television, one must recognize that this tradition will shape the future character of the medium more than any number of speeches Newton Minow can hope to deliver. But one must also recognize that the road to improvement is to understand that the tradition itself has value (beyond its demonstrably universal appeal), that a surprising amount of good work is done within it even now, and that better things can be done within it if the will to do them is present.

None of this, of course, is to deny that some of television's current difficulties are due to the careless melding of the techniques of film to the economic structure and programming pattern of radio. Radio required no settings, its special effects (including crowds) could be created by a single sound-effects man, its actors needed little rehearsal (and only a small, very special, skill) in order to be effective. Even its writers, aided as they were by the imaginations of their listeners, found it possible to grind out an acceptable script a week for a continuing series. All in all, it was an ideal medium for providing a great quantity of mass entertainment cheaply, regularly, reliably. Movies, on the other hand, required time and money to produce well, for the visual realization even of the tritest, most familiar kind of popular entertainment is extremely difficult and expensive. At most, Hollywood working at full capacity could only turn out 500 hours of entertainment a year. A single television network must program at least a hundred hours a week of entertainment, with the cost of getting the product before the consumer infinitely higher than the cost of distributing films. The point is obvious: the average quality of performance on television has to be lower than the average quality of either radio or films. This is the price the consumer must pay for demanding, in effect, feature films on a radio-like schedule. The only solution to this problem would be to limit the hours allowed for broadcasting, or—more feasibly—to flip the tuning dial, which, indeed, the advertising people, trying desperately to use an unselective medium selectively, would like us to do. They try to relate program content to product advertised, and they really do not want the "CBS Reports" crowd listening in on "Stony Burke," for such confusions of audience do neither program nor product any good. Alas, there is simply no way of preventing people like Marya Mannes from watching something that was not meant for their selective eyes.

To return, however, to the deeper problem—the cultural tradition of which television is the heir—it seems clear that much of the fury against the medium derives from a deep-seated bias against the tradition itself. The notion that objective reality is more interesting, more "useful," more uplifting, than idle fancy remains powerful in this still puritanical society of ours, with its fear of the dark psychological forces within and its insistence on confusing seriousness with solemnity, lightness with frivolity, and escapism with moral shirking. This complex of attitudes has done much to inhibit the emergence of a body of television criticism that would leave generalized dismissals to professional moralists and concentrate instead on discriminating intelligently between a good episode of "Ben Casey" and a bad one, and on paying attention to where the differences lie. Such a criticism would see, for example, that the trouble with the domestic comedies featured on television is not that they appeal to nostalgia in presenting an idyllic image of a vanished style of life; it is that on the whole they are produced by people who have not been encouraged to develop enough respect for the kind of thing they are doing to do it really

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well. So too with the fantasy of the Western or detective hero who retains the ability to mold reality to his own liking, or with those other fantasies of violence that appeal to a basic type of impulse which gets little play in our civilization. Those who work in television and those who would like to raise its standards, would do well to ponder the words of the English social critic, Richard Hoggart:

> The best light shows live in the same world as genuinely intellectual or deeply imaginative works. The worst light shows belong to the same phony world as gimmicky cultural programs. Their error is not that they are either too coarse or too demanding; it is that they are empty.

Hoggart's point of view opens the way to a revision of the critical standards that can relevantly be applied to television. To further the task of revision, we can also draw on the following words of the psychologist Rudolf Arnheim:

> The senses are useful when their contribution is not overestimated. In the culture we happen to live in, they teach us relatively little. The world of our century is a poor actor: it does show its variegated outside, but its true nature is not immediately apparent either to the eyes or the ears.

Television is obviously a sensory medium. Therefore, if Arnheim is right, it can never be used for truly great teaching, for truly deep artistic expression, for a truly profound analysis of the human condition. Its natural gift is for whatever can be immediately sensed and quickly apprehended —and in small dimensions at that. To quote Fred W. Friendly of CBS, who uses the medium about as well, and as seriously, as anyone has yet managed to do: "What television does best is to transport you, the viewer, to a place, a person. Television is, after all, a small black box which is not suitable for the presentation of the big, panoramic view."

Here television's brief, self-admitted foray into the world of art is instructive. This occurred in the early 50's, on the weekly hour and hour-and-a-half live drama shows. At an FCC hearing about eighteen months ago, spokesman after spokesman came forward to claim that this was television's finest hour, cruelly ended by the unfeeling commercial interests. "In that time, all unknown to me," commented Warren Miller, who covered the hearing, "Robert Alan Arthur was painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel one night a week from nine to ten; and while my back was turned, Beaumont and Fletcher (Paddy Chayefsky and Tad Mosel) were ushering in a new Elizabethan Age." The truth, as Miller was implying, is that these plays were merely pretty good little dramas about pretty good little people. Yet they were not small through lack of ambition. They were small because the medium itself—flickering amidst the chronic distractions of the American home, where it cannot force attention as both occasion and architecture do in the theater—can digest nothing larger. The live shows, moreover, were no better as literature, and slightly worse as vehicles for actors and directors (live production presents terrible burdens, greater than necessary limits of movement and scope) than the filmed dramas made in Hollywood which have more recently replaced them. The vision of life embodied in "The Dick Powell Show" or "Premiere" or "Ben Casey" or "Dr. Kildare" or "The Defenders" is just as expansive, just as true, and just as false as the vision expressed in the plays of Chayefsky, Serling, and the rest.

BUT WHAT about educational television? The answer would seem to be that it must contend with the same technical limitations as the best intentioned commercial broadcasters. Informative as discussion programs sometimes are, they appeal mainly to the ear, and unless the educational broadcasters can give the eye some more pleasing prospect than a speaker's face to gaze upon, they might as well be doing radio. But the dilemma is that

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visual stimulation—achieved principally through photographing motion, or keeping the camera moving while it studies a still object, or by editing—is fundamentally at odds with the desire to discuss a subject with real seriousness. And in any case, educational TV in its discussion programs and documentaries has so far merely imitated the techniques of the networks—usually with less professional skill, and in an area where the need for its services is not altogether pressing. I conducted a survey of the news, documentary, and public affairs programming of New York's three network outlets one week last fall. Between the hours of 6 P.M. and 11 P.M., Sunday to Saturday, these stations had 105 hours of time available to them. The possibility that some of their entertainment programming must have had some slight educational significance ("The Defenders," for instance, was doing a very serious dramatic examination of the McNaughton rules as the legal definition of insanity) was not admitted. I found that these stations devoted nineteen and three-quarter hours to programs very like those appearing on the city's educational channel, and most of them were better shows. In other words, the commercial channels were devoting almost 20 per cent of their prime time to educational television, which seems a reasonable proportion to spend on uplift and information. Beyond widening the number of choices available at a given hour to the serious viewer, then, educational television mainly duplicates a service already being performed without noticeably improving the quality of that service. (New Yorkers were not lacking for the glorious opportunity to see Max Lerner or John Ciardi or the ubiquitous Miss Mannes on television before channel 13 was turned over to the educational broadcasts.)

We are thus brought back once again to the need for a serious exploration of the existing possibilities of television. One would like to see the educational stations spend less time discussing the other arts and more time experimenting with the potentialities of their own medium. The fact that educational TV is an economically deprived area means that whatever experiments it can undertake will have to be very modest—though the discovery of inexpensive new production forms is an extremely worthy goal. What is lacking so far is merely an acceptance of the truth about the nature of television and the imagination to push firmly and steadily against the natural barriers of the medium.

As for the commercial broadcasters, they have had the time and the money to do so, but they have not seen fit to use them. In this they resemble Hollywood and radio, neither of which devoted any of the immense profits of the fat years to experimenting with the medium, testing its true dimensions or trying to discover through trial and error what the practical possibilities for new achievement might be. Now neither Hollywood nor radio has the wherewithal to do so, and we will perhaps never know what they might have done if they had only been willing to try.

THE TELEVISION industry has an opportunity to avoid the mistakes of its ancestor forms. All the commercial broadcasters need to do is to devote just a tiny fraction of their profits—as much, say, as they spend on improving their mechanical equipment, or as much as they spend on lobbying in Washington, or on corporate public relations—to the enterprise of experimenting with the medium toward the end of acquiring a practical knowledge of its basic structural strengths and weaknesses. Just offhand, one can think of a number of matters to which attention might be immediately directed. Given the fact that the editing techniques of many commercials are far more sophisticated than those employed on the programs they support, the industry could experiment with the use of such techniques as dramatic tools. There have also been great technical advances in films and cameras,

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allowing films to be shot using only available light and giving rise to the hope for new, naturalistic dimensions for the documentary. So far, television's efforts to discover the most effective way of exploiting this new potential have been amateurish and disorganized visually and dramatically. The interesting work the late Ernie Kovacs was doing, blending abstract visual techniques to, of all things, the comedy-variety format, has been scarcely mentioned by the critics, let alone developed further by the networks. Yet his shows were utterly original and uniquely designed to fit the special requirements of television.

The public relations gain that would accrue to the industry from a program investigating these and hundreds of other possibilities for better broadcasting within the established economic and technical setup is as obvious as the gain in excellence that would accrue to broadcasting itself. To quote Friendly again:

> We have got to find ideas that are worthy of the tools that have been made available to us. We are in the same position as the government is: we are in danger of having our weaponry get ahead of our ideas. On one of our shows, Dr. Robert Oppenheimer said, "occasionally you find a man who knows two things, and that intersection may be a great event in the history of ideas." Television is like that man. It is a great technical idea. As soon as that idea intersects with other ideas worthy of it, why, it will be a great event.

Given the present state of misunderstanding about television, this intersection may never occur. On the other hand, there is some hope to be found in the fact that younger people tend to have a cooler and more realistic attitude toward television than their elders. Roughly speaking, nearly everyone born after 1930 seems able to keep his feelings about it within bounds. These people were born into the communications revolution, they grew up with it, and they show little inclination to regard television with moral and political passions that more properly belong to the causes of things than to their symptoms. In time the attitudes of this generation are bound to become the dominant ones, and when they do, it seems likely that the discussion of television will become more fruitful.

TO TAKE a still longer view, we need only note that America, too, is in the midst of a revolution of rising expectations. Here it is a cultural revolution, and even allowing for the phoniness of statistics comparing the number of concert-goers to the number of baseball fans, this revolution really seems to be going forward. Eventually it may go far enough to turn the cultural aspirations of the mass audience into genuine needs, and if that ever happens, television will surely respond—business being business. This would not necessarily lead to a renaissance; perhaps one set of fantasies would only be exchanged for another, and perhaps the new set will be less honest or desirable. But some change there is bound to be.

While waiting for it, it is well to remember that forced change is almost always bad, and that in the case of television it would literally require brainwashing on a vast scale to alter the nature of the audience's relationship to the machine. But this is at least as fanciful a prospect as the notion that the government will, in the foreseeable future, nationalize the airwaves, or even set up an American equivalent to the BBC, to act as a measuring stick for the commercial broadcasters. This will never happen, and those who insist that television is a social problem subject to amelioration on such a basis might just as well give up that fantasy before calling on the great public to abandon theirs. Meanwhile, there is much that can be done within the system if misplaced expectations, snobbery about whole genres of expression, and cultural puritanism are not allowed to continue to block the way.

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ELIE WIESEL

AN APPOINTMENT WITH HATE

SEVENTEEN YEARS after I had left it—left, as we say, forever—I went back to Germany.

I returned, last summer, not to exorcise a few aging, probably dated demons, but rather to make a kind of pilgrimage to the sources. The criminal is not alone when he returns to the scene of the crime; he is joined there by his victim, and together they are excited by the same curiosity: to relive that moment which stamped past and future for them both. So I undertook to retrace my steps, to seek a double confrontation: between *them* and myself, and between the self I had left at Buchenwald and the other self that thought it was healed.

I came away from the confrontation with my head down in humiliation. I had been sure of finding my hate for Germany intact; I had thought it eternal, seventeen years before. But you learn that even eternity changes its face.

After the war, I had deliberately avoided all contact with Germans. Their presence physically sickened me: the blood rushed to my head when I received a letter from a cousin in Frankfort. At the Waldorf in New York, two years ago, I had witnessed the meeting of David Ben Gurion and Konrad Adenauer, smiling, handshaking, exchanging compliments. I could hardly bear to watch. Where Germany was concerned, logical arguments no longer had any force for me.

Hence it was with apprehension that I prepared for the journey where my hate was waiting for me. I did not know that it would break the appointment. Baudelaire calls hate a drunkard in the gloom of a tavern who can never fall asleep under the table. But there are drunkards who die in their sleep.

Yet on my side the task should not have been difficult. What could be easier than to detest this people? They had started and lost the most ignominious war in history, and afterward they managed to surpass their conquerors in wealth and happiness. Above all, in complacency.

In the Paris-Stuttgart plane, there was a man sitting beside me who was a student of philosophy at Heidelberg. He asked me what I thought his country was like. I replied: I imagine it abject and kneeling, filled with ruins and cemeteries, sobbing with fear and remorse; I imagine it famished and tormented, its inhabitants crawling on the ground, begging for pardon and oblivion. He burst out laughing. Then I can promise you a surprise, he said.

He was right to laugh at me. Of course, I was not thinking of his country's material condition, for I knew it was at the peak of its productivity. The cold war requires a "German shield," military strength matched by economic power. The Bonn politicians like to talk of the "economic miracle" of the *Bundesrepublik*, and it is so. Reconstructed German in-

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dustry once again plays a preponderant role in world markets, the Krupp factories work at top speed, there is no unemployment. Berlin organizes film festivals to rival those at Cannes and Venice; Volkswagons and Mercedes streak the dusty roads of Asia, not to mention the superhighways of America. Living conditions have never been better, houses hold every comfort and convenience, the worker has more than in France or Italy, and is maybe happier too. Frankfort and Baden-Baden swarm with foreign tourists, as in Paris and Rome one tourist out of two speaks German. A journalist in Munich told me: winning the war is good, losing it is better.

IT WAS NOT ALL this that I found irritating, not the country's prosperity, but the people's complacency—a self-satisfaction unhaunted by the past. Only we others think about the past. They are not doing much thinking about the future, either. People in Norway or Holland, for instance, are more concerned with the fate of Berlin than the West Germans are. The Germans do not seem anxious about their split into two enemy camps and the possible dangers this holds for the world. They look straight into your eyes when you talk to them, as if they had nothing to fear or hide—were accountable to no one. Ready to admit they are no longer our superiors, they insist on being our equals. The German does not permit himself to be judged, he is as good a man as any.

We—the victims—had not imagined, during the war, that it would be this way after Germany's defeat. We were convinced that a great deal of water would have to flow under the bridges of the Rhine before a member of the nation of executioners would dare look with unwavering glance into the eyes of a free man.

The Germans themselves were convinced of this. They were certain that the curse would pursue them, that they would never be allowed to forget. Fear kept them awake at night: the thirst for vengeance of the survivors, they thought, would surely be insatiable. In the years immediately after the war, if you stopped a man in Munich or Kassel he would begin trembling and stammering: "I didn't do anything, see anything, know anything. I was at the front, in the hospital, at my office; I knew nothing of what was happening. I saw trains going east, yes, people disappearing, yes, I saw a column of smoke in the distance, but—I didn't know, no one told me."

Then came the Nuremberg trials, and the execution of the major war criminals. The Germans could scarcely believe what they heard and saw: "Then they don't blame us? . . . They're leaving us alone, they're not going to make us pay?" When they came face to face with Jews, they couldn't help being suspicious. "What do they want from us, what are they up to? They can't forgive us so quickly, what's on their minds?" But finally the Germans understood that they had nothing to fear, and so their fear turned into contempt. "Look at those Jews: they're not even capable of revenge!"—and a new phase began, the phase of self-justification. If we are not judged, it is because we have done nothing, we are innocent. Hitler? The world could and should have stopped him in time; it did not, and it must share our guilt. The camps? Their existence was known in Washington, in London, in the Vatican: no voice was raised in protest against Auschwitz. The German people were not the only ones silent: great leaders accustomed to speaking in the name of conscience and of civilization were also silent. Why blame only us?

Nevertheless, the Germans did admit a certain guilt toward the Jews. The Bonn government signed the reparations agreement with Israel and the Claims Conference in acknowledgment of this guilt—and that was that. What more did anyone want? Israel itself had offered them pardon: Israel had sold "Uzi" machine guns to the German army, and Israeli manufacturers had supplied it with uniforms.

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Adenauer's Germany, Ben Gurion proclaimed in a foreign policy speech to the Knesset, is no longer the Germany that lived under Hitler. And Washington agrees. Chancellor Adenauer is one of the West's Big Four; if Bonn pouts over Berlin or NATO, Washington does all it can to restore good feelings: the normal procedures of the cold war world.

How, then, should the Germans be embarrassed any longer before a foreign visitor, or play the innocent to impress anyone? They are as they are, and if you don't like them, too bad. They will neither change nor lie to please a foreigner. Israel's request to establish normal diplomatic relations was met with a polite but firm refusal from Bonn: it was not the other way round. It is as if the Germans were saying to Israel: it's over, we no longer owe you anything. At Brussels, when Israel needed support in order to reach an agreement with the Common Market, it was not Germany that stepped forward. Israel had ceased being a moral problem for Germany—the issue was now political. The converse, unfortunately, was also true.

THE GERMANY that swarmed with impersonators and cowardly liars during the years immediately following the capitulation of the Wehrmacht, that Germany no longer exists. You no longer hear anyone cursing Hitler in hopes of exonerating himself. No one, these days, feels he has to exclaim: "It wasn't me, it was those others!" One young intellectual told me: "Hitler wasn't a bad man; he was wrong to surround himself with scum." Another young intellectual repeated to me what Heinrich Gruber, the famous bishop of Berlin and the only German witness at the Eichmann Trial, had said to a visitor from America: "Hitler was only the scourge of God to chastise His people." In which case, are we permitted to judge the Divine Instrument?

Now and then a scandal breaks which arouses a measure of public opinion. Wolfgang Fraenkel, attorney-general of the Bonn Supreme Court, confessed finally that he had himself been a Nazi judge on the infamous "People's Tribunals"; more than one death lay on his own conscience, while for ten years he was officially probing the consciences of his former comrades who did exactly what he did under Hitler. A nice comedy. He was relieved of his post, but not of his rights to a pension.

In Hamburg, Fritz Puls was arrested and accused of war crimes during the Russian campaign. At the time of his arrest, he was serving as a district judge.

In Frankfort, Otto Hunsche, one of Eichmann's aides, was tried and convicted: co-responsible for the deportation of the Hungarian Jews. When he was sentenced to a mere five years in prison, even the German press cried shame.

In Nuremberg, Erich von dem Bach-Zelweski, a former SS general, commander of an Einspatz-Kommando in charge of slaughtering Jews and Russian partisans, was accused of having murdered seven members of an anti-Nazi group in 1933. (The tens of thousands of Polish Jews he and his SS men killed off even before they destroyed the Warsaw Ghetto were not included in the indictment.)

But these cases, exploding in the German press from time to time, are not instruments of justice, nor of purification, but only of internal politics. The Fraenkel scandal came to light only because the East German Communists saw in it a chance to damage Bonn: and it was they who produced the documents and furnished the proofs which the opposition in Bonn then used to explode the case. Whenever the opposition wants to embarrass Adenauer, it opens a dossier on one of his collaborators, most of whom—Hans Globke most prominently—cannot boast of a spotless past.

The Germans no longer feel any shame over these exposures and they deny outsiders the right to intervene in any way. It is their own business, they say—just as an internal American scandal (they mention Billy Sol Estes) is exclusively American

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business, or the Israeli scandal of Yaakov Bar-Or (Gideon Hauser's assistant, recently found guilty of using false university degrees) concerns only Israel. If (as in the case of Franz-Josef Strauss) the German army is involved in politics, that also is strictly Germany's business. If you say to them: "You are forgetting that it was in this way that your country first fell into the hands of dictators," they reply: "Keep your own nose clean. Look at America's General Walker, France's Generals Salan and Jouhaud." It is useless to argue that Walker was dismissed, that Salan and Jouhaud are in prison. The Germans no longer feel they are standing at the bar of history.

I FOR ONE had no desire to argue with them. I could not imagine that a dialogue was possible. Anything between us would not be words: language was already too much of a link.

But finally, if I was compelled to cut short my visit and take the plane back to Paris after forty-eight hours, it was precisely because I fell into the trap: I answered questions, I shook hands, I even smiled back. And then I could bear no more of this civilized behavior: I began to hate myself, having lost my taste for hating others.

The very first contact was, indeed, just as I had imagined it would be. A shudder ran through me as I set foot on German soil and caught sight of the police uniforms. When the customs officer questioned me in German I chose to answer in English, in brief, hostile phrases. "Nothing to declare?" he asked.

"Nothing."

"No coffee?"

"I said: nothing."

"Danke sehr, mein Herr." I shrugged and walked away from him without another word. German *politesse* was something I was not interested in. The customs man stared after me—he was no longer used to this sort of hostility.

(In New York, I had run into a different kind of official. When I went to arrange for my trip, the head of the visa section of the German Consulate behaved with particular arrogance. It was clear that he suspected every Jew who asked for a visa of scheming to emigrate to Germany. His interrogation was humiliating. When I objected, he furiously reproached me for being oversensitive: he did not understand how a Jew could be oversensitive to a German who is only trying to hurt his feelings.)

I strolled through the streets of Stuttgart, waiting for the train for Baden-Baden. Now and then my eyes rested on a face: "This one too?" I stared insistently at a middle-aged man; I wanted to perceive the invisible: what had he done during the war? Had our paths ever crossed in the world of concentration camps? I was in enemy territory, surrounded by suspect faces; on guard, as if threatened by an unknown but familiar danger.

I had been walking in silence, alone, for an hour. A young woman came up and asked me the way to the station. I told her I did not know, that I was a stranger. She smiled. I almost smiled back, when my lips suddenly froze: I became aware that I had been speaking *German.*

Later I allowed myself to relax. The definition of man as a social animal—a polite animal—is a true one. I had mistakenly supposed that all definitions would have to be revised for Germany.

In Baden-Baden I took part in the taping of a radio program. Listening afterwards I found what I heard incredible: there was no hate in my voice, not even bitterness, perhaps just a shade of the anger I was, unconsciously, trying to conceal. Instead of shrieking out a curse, I merely murmured. It is difficult to live among men because it is difficult to keep still, Nietzsche said. But I should have kept still.

Next day I spoke in Munich. The Bechtle Verlag, my publisher in Germany, had arranged an evening of readings. I read from the original French text of my

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first book, *Night,* which is a memoir of Auschwitz and Buchenwald, and the young novelist Peter Jokostra read the German translation. The audience listened in silence, and then sat motionless for a while. I reassured myself: after all, there is a certain logic in my being here and relating to these Germans a few chapters of "our" history—our history in common. But I could not shake off the uneasiness that weighed upon me. The Israeli humorist Ephraim Kishon has remarked: Logic, too, went up in smoke at Auschwitz.

I talked about literature and philosophy far into the night with a group of writers, young men between twenty and thirty. The subject of the camps came up seldom, always indirectly, elliptically. One man said to me: "It doesn't interest me, because man doesn't interest me; only abstract ideas are worth bothering about." Another remarked, apologetically: "Such themes are too sad. I like literature to have more gaiety, more *joie de vivre.*" A third said: "I heard you read tonight, but I must confess that concentration camp literature leaves me cold, I just don't understand it."

Of course there are some German writers tormented by a guilt they shared by the mere fact of having lived under the Nazi regime—Heinrich Böll and Paul Shaluck, for example. Others live with a memory inherited from their fathers: like Günter Grass. The burden of guilt weighs sometimes heavy, sometimes lighter. In the writings of Martin Walser, Peter Jokostra, Alfred Andersch, or Ulrich Becher, there is, if not revolt, at least a search for justice and an authentic protest. Their heroes sit uncomfortably in their skins, feeling their corruption. Yet these writers, for the most part, do not truly represent the younger generation. The members of the younger generation have adopted a quasi-Brechtian attitude, seeing and judging the past from a distance, not in order to comprehend it better but to prove that they have nothing in common with it. Novelists like Hans Christian Kirsch or Uwe Johnson turn their backs on the Nazi period as something alien to them. In the schools, there is rarely a mention of what the Jewish Question was under Hitler. Dachau for the young students is the name of a peaceful village: the word has no other ring. Auschwitz is—ancient history. Yet these students have to be told something, and they are told that it is true the Nazis mistreated the Jews: but the teachers do not go into indelicate detail. Even if they did, the students would not be interested—it is all dead and gone and they can pass their tests and make their way in life without knowing such things.

I had imagined an angry German youth. I had seen the reports of students making a pilgrimage to Bergen-Belsen, and shedding bitter tears at a performance of *The Diary of Anne Frank.* Surely if any youth had the right, and even the urgent duty, to fling its rage into the face of its parents, it was not the youth of England, nor of Paris, but of Germany. May not a young German be permitted to accuse his father: "So that was it, you were at Birkenau. You were one of the cowards, I despise you." So I had imagined. But nothing I saw or heard in Germany, and virtually nothing I have read, bears witness to an angry youth: there is more anger in the youth of France or England or the United States. One exception is Günter Grass. He describes, in his "The Tin Drum," a dwarf who refuses to grow, or talk, or escape his condition: in this way he judges his contemporaries, who may criticize the Adenauer regime but think it political whimsey to bother about what went before.

To be sure, the intellectual elite tries here and there to sound the alarm. Lectures are held, and books dealing with Jewish subjects are published. Martin Buber has for some time now been glorified, *Exodus* appears on the best-seller lists, and a translation is being prepared of the works of Sholem Aleichem and of

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Mendele Mocher Sforim. To all this, the general population continues to remain cool. It is not good breeding, in today's Germany, to discuss Buchenwald. If Schwarz-Bart's *The Last of the Just* achieved only limited sales in Germany as compared with its reception in other countries, it was because it contained an indictment of those who made Ernie Levy their victim. The works of a Paul Rassinier sell better and are praised more. In his three so-called historical sketches, this author claims to "prove" that the Nazi liquidation of the European Jews was only a myth invented by the Zionists and their friends. According to him, the Nazis did not kill off six million Jews—a few hundred thousand at the most. Gas chambers? —pure fantasy. The Germans—young and old—like to hear a "Herr Professor" —for Rassinier is a professor and French —tell them such things. It reassures them. If, at a certain period, the Germans were in bad odor the world over, it was not their fault: blame the Jews.

SUDDENLY, I no longer knew why I had come. To tell them about the camps? Convince them that such things had really existed? To describe the Nazi era which was, in Malraux's phrase, "a time of scorn"? I did nothing of the kind.

Aside from that one reading of a few pages of *Night,* I treated Auschwitz as taboo. I found absurd the notion that a Jewish writer should come and tell the Germans about their crimes. *Reveal,* perhaps, but tell? What was there that had not already been told? Each time my interlocutors out of politeness tried to broach the subject, I changed it. But it was only later that I understood why: I was no longer capable of hating.

A few months before, at a party in New York, a young woman came up to me and said: "Deep down, I'm afraid of you. I know you hate me." I was stunned: "Why should I hate you?" She was of German origin, she confessed. I blushed: "Of course I couldn't hate you, you're too lovely." She was in fact known for her opposition to Hitler and had spent many months in Nazi prisons, but I didn't know it at the time. I had blushed simply because I was ashamed of being accused of hate: so I had explained it to myself. The real truth was different: I had blushed because I was ashamed of having permitted my hate to get away from me. It was this shame that overwhelmed me in Germany: I was betraying the dead. Instead of judging the Germans, then, I judged myself.

After the war, one question had absorbed me: how explain the absence of vengeful feelings on the part of the survivors? When Buchenwald was liberated, the Russian prisoners lost no time commandeering American jeeps and driving to Weimar, where for hours on end they machine-gunned the inhabitants for having led a normal—if not peaceful—life on the other side of the barbed wire. The liberated Jews did nothing like this. Why not? In Palestine, in the kibbutzim and around the Palmach campfires, the idea of vengeance was violently argued—and rejected. The basic principle embraced was that the Nazi crimes must be opposed by a humane justice: hate must not be fought with hate. We had to show the executioners our moral superiority, prove to the other peoples that the Jews are incapable of deeds of hate. Hatred of the enemy—especially in his defeat—has never been a Jewish habit. "Rejoice not on seeing thine enemy struck down," Solomon teaches. There is a passage in the Midrash which describes the wrath of God against His angels who had begun singing His praises as the Jews were crossing the Red Sea. "My creatures [the Egyptians] are drowning and you are disposed to sing?" And though he lost his throne for it, Saul refused to kill Agag, the Amalekite king who is the symbol of Israel's hereditary enemy. Typically, in the few places where hatred figures in the Bible, it is always hatred of family, of tribe, or of neighbor—not of foreigners. The Jews are

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suspicious of foreigners, they do not hate them. The Torah bids us remember Amalek, not hate it. In modern times, the ghetto Jews expended upon the *Judenrat* a more concentrated hatred than upon the Germans themselves, and during the British occupation of Palestine, the secret political organizations hated each other more than they hated the English.

The night Eichmann was executed, a friend of mine made a remark which at the time left me perplexed: he could not help feeling a kind of pity for this functionary of death as he stepped to the scaffold. I protested violently. It was, indeed, not until I re-entered Germany that I understood about hate, a hate that was more than desirable: justified. It escapes us, disappears as the events that engendered it have disappeared.

A Jewish poet in an extermination camp prayed: "O God, give me the strength to hate." Of reasons he had more than enough, and it was only strength he needed. Two thousand years of persecution had failed to prepare the Jewish mentality for hate, had only immunized it against hate. Jewish history is full of examples, from Akiba to Hillel Zeitlin, of how the Jews have always been able to meet beast with man, massacre with prayer, cruelty with faith.

It must be said, moreover, that relations —aside from the business of propaganda —between Jews and Germans had always been, in the time of the apocalypse, devoid of hatred. This seems strange, yet it is what gave—and still gives—the tragedy its true dimension of horror. "I am not an anti-Semite," Eichmann proclaimed in his trial at Jerusalem: the same Eichmann who was responsible for thousands of death trains. Absurd as it seems, he was probably telling the truth. He killed off Jews—and he did not necessarily hate them. The Nazis saw the Jews not as human beings—stimulating hatred or justifying it—but simply as objects, minerals, numbers: one does not hate numbers. As for the Jews, they saw the Germans as a machine crushing life and spirit, reducing them to ashes: one does not hate a machine. In the camp—I am trying to remember—my senses were too atrophied to make me capable of hate. Yet if I was able to feel hate, it was directed toward my bunkmate because he had wangled an additional ration of soup or bread. You hate man. For us the SS guards were a force that destroyed and denied man. You do not hate the stone that crushes you, or the animal that devours you. Only man inspires hate, and only man suffers it. At the moment of his death, the victim does not cast his last glance of hate at the executioner: it is his comrades he hates, those who betrayed or abandoned or forgot him, or simply, those who remain alive, which is reason enough to hate them. The executioner already belongs to the landscape of death. "I forgive you!" Pierre Laval shouted these last words to the soldiers of the firing squad. His hate was directed toward the judges and witnesses, and toward the joy of the victors—his equals, whom chance had favored. In our heart of hearts, we hate only what resembles us. The first murder was a fratricide.

There is a time to love and a time to hate; whoever does not hate when he should, does not deserve to love when he is able. Perhaps, had we learned to hate more during the years of ordeal, fate itself would have taken fright. The Germans did their best to teach us, but we were poor pupils in the discipline of hate. Yet today, even having been deserted by my hate during that fleeting visit to Germany, I cry out with all my heart against forgiveness, against forgetting, against silence. Every Jew, somewhere in his being, should set apart a zone of hate—healthy, virile hate—for what the German personifies and for what persists in the German. To do otherwise would be a betrayal of the dead.

* * *

I shall not return to Germany soon again.

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RONALD STEEL

EUROPE, DE GAULLE & THE DETERRENT

THE MARRIAGE of convenience that is the Atlantic alliance has been subject to much of the strain and discord common to unions where romance takes a back seat to logic. But after thirteen and a half years, the novelty has begun to wear off, revealing bare spots in the structure, and a growing tendency to disagree over fundamentals. These strains have become most obvious in the current relations between France and America, where President Kennedy's vision of Atlantic "interdependence" has run head on against de Gaulle's dream of a new "Europe of nations" united under French leadership. The impact of these two plans has placed the whole foundation of the Atlantic alliance in question. Not since NATO was created in 1949 has there been such an open disagreement on its purpose and its structure. The problem is not, as an administration spokesman implied, a temporary aberration arising from illusions of grandeur on the part of the French President. Quite the contrary: de Gaulle's ambitions are a challenge to the American dominance of the alliance and represent a widespread discontent among our European allies over the present structure of Western defense. The debate over France's nuclear weapons program has tended to obscure rather than clarify this challenge. The real question is not whether France shall have nuclear weapons—she will obtain them by her own efforts despite any American discouragement—but rather how her possession of such weapons will affect the political balance of forces within the Atlantic alliance.

The dispute between Washington and Paris over nuclear policy during the past few months has been argued too simply in military terms. The administration, with hurt pride and a touch of moral outrage, has lectured the French on the dangers of owning nuclear weapons, as though this would impel them to scuttle a project they have been working on for nearly a decade. The dialogue between the two capitals has taken on all the quality of a family squabble—complete with polemics, recriminations, and charges of disloyalty. High administration officials have described de Gaulle's nuclear ambitions as foolish, or diabolical—or both. The Secretary of Defense, having unwrapped a new version of the old "counterforce" theory for "winning" nuclear wars, has told the French that there must be "centralized control" of atomic weapons—a doctrine which they rightly interpret as insuring an American monopoly of the West's nuclear defense.

The arguments from Washington, repeated with awesome regularity, have been grounded in the administration's military strategy. Unfortunately, the logic of

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this strategy, however compelling it may seem in the Pentagon, is largely irrelevant to the deeper political dilemma which has brought on the nuclear dispute. Yet it is the political problem, with the implied challenge it holds to American leadership, which has been scrupulously avoided. Instead, the administration has concentrated on the military equation, and has presented at least four arguments against a French nuclear deterrent. First, it is said, such a force is unnecessary, since the American nuclear umbrella covers all the European allies. Second, it is dangerous, since it could lead to a proliferation of nuclear powers—that is, to demands by other allies, especially Germany, for nuclear status. Third, it is wasteful, since under Pentagon strategy the Europeans, and especially the French with their huge army now largely returned from Algeria, should be increasing their conventional contributions to NATO rather than spending money for nuclear weapons. And finally, under Secretary McNamara's new strategy for conducting rather than simply deterring nuclear warfare, a French force is destabilizing since it would establish a separate center of nuclear power within the alliance. The American position, whatever formulas may be devised to make it palatable, is that the United States must have absolute control over Western nuclear strategy.

THESE military arguments, within their limits, are quite persuasive, and have been accepted by not only a good many American strategists, but by a number of Europeans as well. The French, however, have some very compelling responses to them. In the first place, they question whether American nuclear protection really does continue to cover Europe. As President de Gaulle has often pointed out, the achievement of nuclear parity between the United States and the Soviet Union has greatly modified the conditions of the American nuclear guarantee. When NATO was formed the Americans had a virtual monopoly of atomic weapons, capable of responding to any Soviet incursion into Western Europe by an overwhelming nuclear attack on Russia itself from American bases in Europe and North Africa. The Russians, however, could not imperil the continental United States, and thus the American guarantee to Europe was both militarily and psychologically convincing. But today these conditions no longer exist. The missile age now allows America and Russia to obliterate one another within a matter of hours—without relying on foreign bases. For Europe this means that a completely new element—the vulnerability of the United States—has become the crucial factor of the American guarantee.

As de Gaulle observed in his May 1962 press conference, since the creation of NATO "new elements of an extraordinary dimension have emerged. . . . Soviet Russia now, too, has an enormous nuclear arsenal which is increasing every day, just as that of the United States is doing. . . . No one today can know when, nor how, nor why one or the other of these great atomic powers may employ its nuclear arsenal." Would an American President respond to a Russian probe into Western Europe with the full force of atomic weapons—knowing that this would involve the destruction of the United States itself? And even if he would today, would he in five, or ten, or fifteen years when the world political situation might be very different? Detroit for Oslo, Los Angeles for Stuttgart? Maybe, but who can be sure? What nation can be expected to engage in nuclear war in the defense of another?

Believing that nuclear parity has made the American guarantee no longer convincing, de Gaulle is determined to create a finite nuclear force capable of deterring an attack upon France. Within the next few years, as technical developments impel America to withdraw its bomber and missile forces from Europe in favor of an American-based defense, the nuclear guarantee to Europe will seem even less credi-

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ble. Missile technology, by making the United States no longer dependent on European bases, can only undermine the theory of the nuclear umbrella.

THE SECOND American argument, that a French nuclear capacity will lead to a proliferation of nuclear forces, is one which France's nuclear allies are in an uncomfortable position to apply against her. The dangers of nuclear possession have not prevented the United States from acquiring and expanding a nuclear arsenal, and the perils of proliferation did not deter the British from building a nuclear force which they are determined to maintain even at considerable economic sacrifice. This despite the fact that the British force, as Secretary McNamara conceded to the delight of the Macmillan government's Labor critics, is scarcely even independent, since it is largely integrated into the American strategic command. Why, then, did the British develop an atomic arsenal in the first place, why did they later go on to build thermonuclear weapons, and why do they insist on maintaining a nationally controlled nuclear force? One would search in vain for a compelling military argument. The reason is almost entirely political (which makes it no less important) and was summed up by Prime Minister Macmillan when he defended the British decision to build the H-bomb before Commons in 1958: "The independent contribution gives us a better position in the world, it gives us a better position with respect to the United States. It puts us where we ought to be, in the position of a great power. The fact that we have it makes the United States pay a greater regard to our point of view, and that is of great importance." The British government, for very obvious reasons, has had the good grace not to chastise the French for following the same road they themselves long ago embarked upon.

The French, for their part, fail to appreciate American criticism of their nuclear efforts, especially in view of consistent American atomic assistance to Britain. As Foreign Minister Couve de Murville observed in an American television interview last spring: "I have never heard anyone say that Great Britain's possession of nuclear weapons constituted a danger for the United States. Why should it in the case of another ally such as ourselves?" While it may be argued that the British are more willing than the French to accept American direction of their nuclear forces, this is not the kind of argument which cements alliances. Our refusal to aid the French, now that they have already achieved an atomic capacity by their own efforts, has only led them to doubt our motives and our loyalties. When de Gaulle's nuclear policy was debated in the National Assembly during the summer, the government was the target of considerable criticism (much of it based on domestic grievances), but opponents were unable to give any convincing retort to Premier Pompidou's reply to the charge that a French nuclear force might be dangerous. "In what way," he asked, "would the danger be greater if France had its own nuclear arms than if it had nuclear arms of an allied power on its national soil? Are they aiming to bring us to a sort of neutralization of Europe which would leave our continent disarmed and at the mercy of attacks of one side or dependent on the good will of the other?" It was not only the government's supporters who wondered whether America's much advertised fears of a proliferation of nuclear forces might be largely motivated by a desire to retain its own atomic dominance. The recall of General Norstad from NATO has only reinforced de Gaulle's conviction that the Americans are opposed to any nuclear deterrent force in European hands, and that only a European atomic force under French leadership can assure the defense of Europe.

The third American contention, that the Europeans should be beefing up their conventional forces instead of trying to build small nuclear arsenals, is basically

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irrelevant. In the first place, it suggests that Europeans are to be relegated to the role of cannon fodder in the event that hostilities actually break out. A division of forces within an alliance which prescribes that Europe should furnish the troops and America the atomic bombs is not a balance which strongly recommends itself to Europeans. Not only does it demand enormous personal sacrifices which no European government desiring to remain in office dares call upon its people to make, but it gives Europeans the feeling that they are little more than an instrument of American strategy. This is a sacrifice which poor and military-dominated nations such as Turkey and Pakistan may be willing to accept in return for American aid, but it is not one which the prosperous nations of Western Europe can be expected to support. To be sure, it is in the interest of European states to prevent the outbreak of nuclear war on their territory and to restrict any potential conflict to conventional weapons. But this rests on the assumption that the Russians would choose to launch a conventional rather than a nuclear attack. And the foundation behind this is that there must be a convincing nuclear force which would deter the Russians from using their nuclear weapons—if, indeed, that is their intention. Since de Gaulle believes that the Americans can no longer provide such deterrence, Europe's primary military need must logically be a convincing nuclear force rather than larger land armies. The new American doctrine of a conventional "pause" before nuclear weapons are called into use thus comes several years too late. It could only be a compelling reason for Europe to rely on the American deterrent while American nuclear superiority was unchallenged. And that situation no longer exists.

The Germans, in their geographically exposed position, are especially reluctant to accept the conventional "pause" theory. For them it seems to offer only the likelihood of their being occupied by Soviet troops and then devastated by American nuclear weapons. They insist, with good reason, that the West's nuclear strength be used to deter any attack—conventional or nuclear—in Europe, not to fight it once it has occurred. While the Kennedy administration may think of the defense of the West as indivisible, any German government must first think of Germany—and a war fought on German soil is contrary to any conception of German interests, however integral a part it may be of the wider global strategies evolved in Washington. The Federal Republic may be willing to sacrifice the Eastern zone to its alliance with NATO, but it will never accept a defense theory which implies the possibility of its occupation. By thinking so globally that it fails to recognize that American interests (which are usually defined in Washington as NATO or even Western interests) are not always identical with those of our allies, the administration may end up by forcing the Germans into nuclear reliance upon France as the only way of gaining a defense they believe vital to their own interests.

THE ADMINISTRATION'S final argument against a French nuclear force centers on the revival by the Secretary of Defense of the "counterforce" strategy for conducting nuclear warfare. This strategy, which seeks to combine deterrence and defense, holds that "centralized control" (that is, centralized in American hands) is essential if "counterforce"—Pentagon jargon for the destruction of an opponent's military forces, by first strike if necessary—is to work. Counterforce, Mr. McNamara explained at Ann Arbor last June, could "preserve the fabric of our societies" by laying down Queensberry rules under which the United States and Russia would agree to spare one another's cities in case of nuclear war and concentrate on military targets. This assumes, of course, that nobody loses his head, that military and civilian targets can be separated, and that

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American and Russian strategists show a solicitous regard for one another's welfare in time of war that they were unable to evidence before hostilities. The drawbacks of counterforce, like the theory itself, have been often elaborated. Not only does it involve the intensification of the arms race as both sides jockey for the nuclear superiority which would make the implied first strike credible, but it actually increases the dangers of nuclear war by making them concentrate on fighting rather than deterring it. Seemingly given a quiet burial only a year ago by the administration, counterforce, by the most remarkable of coincidences, was revived this past spring at the Athens NATO meeting as an argument against an independent European nuclear deterrent.

From a European point of view, the position as elaborated by Secretary McNamara is not very compelling. "If what the United States is promising in her new strategy," Hedley Bull has observed, "is that an attack on Soviet nuclear forces will actually eliminate them, and so render Europe secure, then she is promising what cannot be done." And if counterforce cannot guarantee this, then the problem of European defense remains unchanged. The Europeans are being asked, in the name of a defense theory of dubious logic, to forgo any attempts to create an independent nuclear status. And yet it is the creation of this status which offers them the only psychologically convincing instrument of their own defense. To argue, as Walter Lippmann has done, that the United States will not accept the enormous burden of collective security if it loses the initiative in the Atlantic alliance and the responsibility of making the final decision between war and peace, is simply to reinforce the gravest European fears. The decision between war and peace, after all, affects Europe as well as it does America, for it involves the very survival of human societies. The Europeans will relinquish the power of this decision to the Americans only if they are convinced that it is the most responsive instrument of their needs and the most effective guarantee of their defense. A policy which denies them nuclear equality will hardly convince them of this, and will only add to the belief that they have become an instrument of American strategy.

THE AMERICAN monopoly might appear more natural if the Western nuclear force were jointly directed; that is, if the Europeans were able to share control of the American nuclear deterrent. But, understandably enough, Congress would never permit this since there is no political community to which both America and Europe belong. NATO, whatever loyalties it may have engendered, is not such a community. It is a fact of the nuclear age that alliances have simply ceased to be convincing as instruments of nuclear deterrence since they lack psychological credibility. Only a federation of nations can give the assurance that an attack upon one is an attack upon all. The "Atlantic Community," however laudable or noble a goal, is still little more than rhetoric, and NATO appears increasingly unlikely to ever lead to federation between America and Europe. All the declarations of "interdependence" are not going to breathe life into the alliance, so long as the United States continues to insist on a nuclear monopoly. And the refusal to share control of the American nuclear deterrent, coupled with the attacks upon the creation of a European nuclear force, are nothing more than a call for the continuation of American control. Small wonder that "many European nations," as Hanson Baldwin has commented, "feel the United States wants to have its cake and eat it too —to control, without any European veto, its own nuclear delivery capability everywhere in the world, but to retain a veto power over any European capacity."

What European critics want is not to replace the American alliance, but to transform it into a partnership of equals, each playing a complementary but rela-

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tively independent role. Their goal is to make Europe a great political power in its own right, and they believe that it can only be done if Europe is able to provide at least the minimal needs of its own defense. Under the McNamara thesis this is *ipso facto* impossible, and if Europeans accept it they can only resign themselves to the position of permanent inferiority in the Atlantic alliance. But is counterforce really the only reasonable theory of Western defense? It was, after all, virtually scrapped by the administration which has now revived it, and it has always been questioned by strategists outside the Air Force. The alternative to counterforce is a strategy based on finite deterrence, one which posits that a nuclear power can be dissuaded from attack if it knows that it will suffer retaliation against its own territory. This strategy requires only a relatively small number of nuclear weapons, so long as they are protected from a premeditated first strike. So long as manned bombers were the only means of delivering nuclear bombs, such protection was not really feasible since airfields could theoretically be wiped out in a first strike. But the advent of missiles, which can be concealed underground or underwater, has made it possible to protect the deterrent, and thereby assure retaliation. Thus a relatively small but protected missile force can deter a virtually unlimited force; while a Russian attack may obliterate France, French missiles will still be able to destroy Russia's half-dozen largest cities. Surely this knowledge would be the major factor in any conceivable Russian action against France. To be sure, there is no guarantee that this strategy can forever prevent war. Logic breaks down, accidents occur, leaders are seized by madness, and nations find themselves impelled into actions even against their will. But it has two compelling virtues: it is psychologically convincing—considerably more so than an American pledge to commit suicide on behalf of its allies—and it is within the means of Europe. Solid-fuel missiles, having made the United States vulnerable to Soviet nuclear power, have also provided the Europeans with the means of mounting their own nuclear deterrent. And this deterrent will reflect European interests by being responsive to European direction.

AT THE PRESENT TIME the character of the European deterrent is very much in flux. The European integrationists, who have forged the Common Market as the first step toward a politically federated Europe, envisage a European defense force jointly controlled by all the member states of the new Europe. For them a European defense, like a European diplomacy, must logically follow from the economic union which has been created. The French interpretation, as expressed by de Gaulle, is different more in emphasis than in theory. The General envisages a federated rather than a united Europe, in which France would play a leading role based, to a considerable degree, on her possession of a nuclear deterrent which would be exercised in the name of the European community. These two views are not as contradictory as they may seem. The question of European diplomacy will ultimately be decided by compromise—just as the political-economic decisions of the Common Market have been evolved. The essential point is that this will be decided by Europeans acting in a European context. For both de Gaulle and the European integrationists the Europeans must now move on to forge a great united power which will be independent of the United States. This, however unpalatable it may be in Washington, is the political goal of which the French nuclear force is only an instrument.

The problem of Europe's political future is the central point of de Gaulle's diplomacy. He seeks an independent Europe not only as a balance to the United States within the Atlantic alliance, but as the means by which all of Europe, East and West, may yet be united. It is his belief that one day the internal evolution of

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the Soviet system, as well as the inevitable conflict of wills between Russia and China, will end the menace which has made necessary the European alliance with America. At that point a diplomatically and militarily independent Western Europe will be able to negotiate directly with the Russians for the return of the satellites to the wider European community. Then Europe, stretching, as de Gaulle has said, "from the Atlantic to the Urals," will become a powerful third force in the world, pursuing the historic destiny that was tragically interrupted by the civil wars of the 20th century. It is an imposing vision, but not one wholly without credibility. Russia is, in a very real sense, a European civilization, and her disputes with China are making her increasingly aware of it. Alliances change, today's opponent usually becomes tomorrow's ally, and as de Gaulle has said, looking back on the long sweep of European history: "No quarrel between peoples is permanent."

ULTIMATELY Europe, if it is to have any meaning, must be restored to unity. It cannot forever remain split in half, each part under the influence of conflicting nuclear giants. But how shall this unity be achieved? It has long been obvious that such unity can never be brought into being by a policy of force—periodic lip-service to "liberation" notwithstanding—and the Russians know very well from the case of Hungary that the West will not risk nuclear war for the Soviet satellites. If force, which is simply another word for nuclear conflict, is to be ruled out, is there any other hope for restoring the satellites to independence? Perhaps it could be done through direct American-Soviet negotiation, but that would involve the creation of a neutral zone in central Europe and the nuclear disarmament of Germany—a policy as antipathetic to the Kennedy administration as to its predecessors. Not only would it mean the recognition of the present borders in Europe, thereby shattering the West German myth that the Eastern zone shall be miraculously restored to it without the slightest concession on its part, but also a readjustment of Germany's role within NATO. Such a policy of disengagement appears to be anathema in Washington, confirming the rueful comment made several years ago by George Kennan, that the object of our policy seems less to get Soviet troops out of eastern Europe than to create a German army for the purpose of confronting them while they are there.

American policy, then, by seeking to link Western Europe to the United States in an ambitious but still undefined "Atlantic Union" has for all practical purposes taken the division of Europe for granted. But for de Gaulle, and those Europeans who agree with him that Europe must have an identity of its own that is not submerged by the alliance with a powerful America, this is a betrayal of all that the European ideal stands for. His ambition is to use the new economic, political, and eventual military independence of Western Europe to achieve what an American-based diplomacy has never been able to do: the restoration of the satellites. European solidarity, he explained in May, "can create in Western Europe a construction, an organization that will be so firm, so prosperous, and so magnetic that it will open up the possibilities of a European equilibrium with the states of the East and re-open the perspective of a uniquely European cooperation." In other words, the West Europeans are expected to use their coming maneuverability to negotiate with the Russians over the future of the Europe to which they both belong. Why should the Russians be more willing to negotiate with the French or a West European team than they have with the Americans? In the first place, we cannot be sure that they are adverse to negotiations with us since they have never been seriously attempted on a basis of mutual concessions. But beyond that, the Europeans can offer the Russians something that no American government is able to do: the assurance that the satel-

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lites would never be drawn into an American-dominated, anti-Soviet alliance—into NATO, in short. To do this, of course, the Europeans would have to be masters of both their defense and their diplomacy; and this is exactly the object of de Gaulle's nuclear ambitions.

THE ACHIEVEMENT of de Gaulle's policies, therefore, depends largely upon his ability to forge a powerful military force. Defense is the fulcrum on which an independent diplomacy must rest, and it is this independence, not the satisfaction of French *"grandeur,"* which lies at the base of Gaullist ambitions. In the early stages, the French nuclear force must remain a national one, if for no other reason than that France is the only continental nation which is willing to build it, and to defy the Kennedy administration by doing so. But ultimately, as Premier Pompidou hinted in July before the National Assembly, the French force will become part of a larger European deterrent. Both the enormous cost of a nuclear delivery system and the indivisibility of European defense make this essential. The foundation for such a force already exists in the separate French and British nuclear weapons systems. Logically, they should be brought together, for the existence of two national nuclear forces within Europe is hardly reasonable. The objections to this, which come, curiously enough, more from the British Labor party than from the government, are that Britain must never give up her "special relationship" with the United States by pooling her atomic weapons with France, that Britain would be unable to follow an independent foreign policy, and that this would be the final act of her submergence into Catholic Europe. These arguments, however, hold little water. Whatever "special relationship" Britain has had with the United States has rested largely on her ability to speak for Europe. This she has virtually ceased to do, and the gap between Britain and Europe is growing wider the longer she delays entering the Common Market. To argue that Britain can follow an independent foreign policy is to ignore the lessons of history since the end of the Second World War. Suez and Cuba reveal how independent British foreign policy can be in an age of super-powers. And, finally, if Britain is really worried that the Common Market is being dominated by Christian Democracy, then the only logical reaction is to join it and redress the balance.

Nations do not always do what their best interests impel them to, but assuming that Britain finally recognizes she is a part of Europe and enters the Common Market, it must follow that she joins Europe not only economically, but militarily as well. While there is no question of Britain's "buying" her way into Europe with a nuclear dowry, it would be completely inimical to the political conception on which the Common Market is based for her to try to retain a purely national defense force.* More than Commonwealth sentimentality is going to have to be given up when Britain finally takes the plunge. But the British really have little choice, for unless they enter the Common Market and join in the creation of a European diplomacy, they must watch their value to the United States decline as Europe constitutes itself without her. Nor can they have it both ways, for de Gaulle will never allow Britain to put an economic toe into Europe and retain a nuclear defense integrated with America. The Kennedy administration's prodding of British entry into the Common Market seems to be based on the belief that Britain's presence in Europe can protect America's interests. While this may be true, it is also suspected, as Raymond Aron has observed, as an attempt to prevent the

* The New York *Times* London correspondent reported in November that the Macmillan government now favors the creation of an independent European nuclear deterrent in cooperation with France. It is perhaps more than coincidence that this announcement followed in the wake of the unilateral American action in the Cuban crisis.

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emergence of an independent Europe foreign policy. The decision is not an easy one, but sooner or later the British will have to realize that their real choice is not between Europe and the Commonwealth, but between Europe and America. And as the Manchester *Guardian,* a long-time foe of the British atomic weapons program, commented: "European public opinion will never accept that the nuclear defense of the West be left exclusively in American hands under the exclusive control of the President of the United States."

Assuming that Britain ultimately does enter Europe, the way will be paved for de Gaulle's grand design for the reunification of the Continent. For only a militarily strong and diplomatically united Europe will have the bargaining power to obtain the release of the satellites from the Soviet Union. Of course de Gaulle realizes that the Russians are not going to cooperate out of affection for a European mystique. But he believes that as they are faced with increasing challenges from China, as well as the continuation of the atomic rivalry with America, they will find it to their interests to reach a general European settlement. While this may seem like waiting for shrimps to whistle, de Gaulle actually has a trump card up his sleeve—one which holds the key to his puzzling intransigence over the Berlin negotiations. He knows that the Russians are truly frightened lest the West Germans should acquire atomic weapons. For them this evokes a nightmare of the Germans engaging the United States in a war with the Soviet Union for the Eastern zone and even for the lost territories in Poland and Russia itself. Khrushchev cannot prevent the atomic armament of Germany if her allies are determined to permit it—but he can attempt to gain official recognition of the territorial changes that resulted from the Second World War before the Germans obtain nuclear arms. The vulnerability of Berlin is his only means of pressuring the West to stabilize east Europe's frontiers in a peace treaty before it is too late.

De Gaulle, it should be emphasized, is no more eager than Khrushchev to see the West Germans sitting on an atomic arsenal—homages to Adenauer notwithstanding. Like the Chancellor himself, he fears that German democracy is still too fragile to be thrown into the international power arena on its own resources. But he also believes that the Russian fear of German nuclear armament may be turned to the West's advantage by using it as a bargaining point. In return for recognition of the present frontiers and a pledge against German atomic armament, the Russians might find it to their advantage to release their iron control on the satellites and permit their restoration to Europe. But—and this is the essential point which separates Gaullist from American policy—they will only negotiate with a truly independent Western Europe, since they could never permit the satellites to be swept into an American-dominated NATO. Despite his antipathy toward Communism, de Gaulle has kept the door open to possible future negotiations with Moscow by acknowledging Russian security interests in eastern Europe. And only he among the Western leaders has publicly recognized the Oder-Neisse line as Germany's permanent eastern frontier.

THE ACHIEVEMENT of de Gaulle's diplomacy depends on cementing the ties of the Franco-German alliance. Germany must be so tightly drawn into the West European community that she will interpret European interests as being virtually identical with German interests. Only then will she be able to make the sacrifice upon which European unity and the freedom of the satellites depends—the renunciation of nuclear weapons. This is why de Gaulle has refused to participate in the Berlin talks—believing that they may imperil Western rights without gaining Russian concessions for a meaningful European settlement. Instead, he has preferred to ignore these discussions and thereby strengthen his ties with Adenauer.

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The Chancellor's royal tour of France in July and de Gaulle's reciprocal visit to Germany in September were merely the more dramatic displays of their consistent efforts to bury past enmity and build a solid alliance between the two nations. The so-called Paris-Bonn axis, which some critics assume to be the prelude to a Franco-German nuclear force, is really the foundation for Germany's abandonment of nuclear ambitions. Only if the Germans come to recognize that their future lies in Europe, de Gaulle believes, will they be able to resist atomic armament by the Americans—which would dash all hopes for bringing down the Iron Curtain and compromise the peace of Europe. When asked at his press conference about plans to give atomic weapons to the Bundeswehr, de Gaulle replied that since France had none to give, that question could perhaps be better asked of the White House. Possibly he had in mind large-scale German purchases in America of vehicles for the delivery of nuclear warheads—purchases which President Kennedy has praised as helping to "balance off" the cost of stationing American troops in Germany.

THE DISAGREEMENTS in the Atlantic alliance run very deep and to speak of a "nuclear debate" is to magnify the possibility of choice, for in truth there is no debate. The French are determined to achieve nuclear status—indeed, de Gaulle's entire diplomatic policy in Europe depends upon it—and there is nothing the administration can do to prevent it, short of admitting the French to a Western nuclear tri-directorate. Within a few years the French force will be capable of providing a finite nuclear deterrent upon which an independent European foreign policy hinges. Such a policy may parallel American interests or it may not: the answer depends on how we are able to adapt our diplomacy to the recognition of European equality, as well as how we deal with the changing nature of the Soviet society and the shifting balance of forces within the unstable Communist orbit.

What we cannot do, and what we should not seek to do, is to prevent our European allies from achieving the self-respect and the independence upon which any enduring alliance must ultimately rest. Charles de Gaulle is not alone in seeking a restored Europe, capable of defending its interests as Europeans themselves interpret them. He is probably mistaken in believing that France can forge a European diplomacy by virtue of its atomic force, for a united Europe will increasingly evolve a diplomacy that resists national leadership and parochial interests. But he is altogether right in believing that European independence is inconceivable without a European military force capable of providing the minimum needs of its own defense. And it is his leadership which has impelled the Europeans to face the hard questions raised by the impact of defense upon diplomacy. The new European prosperity, which we have so applauded, now has its corollary in the demand for a Europe that will be an equal of the United States. Nothing less will satisfy the Europeans, and nothing less is tenable if the Atlantic alliance is to endure. Speaking for a good many Europeans, André Fontaine wrote in *Le Monde:* "It is inconceivable, unless we are resigned to an interminable cold war, that Europe forever relies on America for its security and for the orientation of its diplomacy."

The new European diplomacy emerging may serve as a stimulus to an American political leadership which has tended to take too many of the stale arguments of the cold war for granted. And no matter how sure it may be of the wisdom of its diplomacy, the administration surely need not be reminded that partners make more lasting allies than do clients. If the "interdependence" between Europe and America which President Kennedy has so warmly espoused is to mean anything, it can only be based on the independence that is the precondition for any community of allies.

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HAROLD R. ISAACS

INTEGRATION & THE NEGRO MOOD

American Negroes have been rediscovering Africa. In doing so, they are not regaining their identity as long-lost Africans but reshaping their identity as Americans. This is a complicated and difficult matter for all the reasons that lie imbedded in the Negro American experience. It is also complicated and difficult because being *American* is itself not so much a condition as a process whose nature is still imprecisely defined and whose ultimate shape no one clearly sees. Nevertheless, like so many other people who have become members of the American society, Negroes must still blend their unique character as a group with the common character they share as Americans. Between these two identifications there has been up to now a deep and mutually deforming split. Negroes have had to fight fiercely for the most elementary part of their share of the common American holding—their equality of rights as citizens. The exclusions and denials that were their lot for so long dominated the shaping of their unique character while laming, as with a shriveled limb, the common American identity itself. Now this system of exclusion is coming to an end, or is at least being sweepingly revised. The Negro group identity based upon it is becoming obsolete, and some kind of new group identity must somehow take shape out of the old elements and the new circumstances. Like the restoration of sight or the use of a paralyzed limb, this change in Negroes must at the same time profoundly alter the American organism of which they will now become a more normally functioning part.

To try to see Negroes going through this great transition is to see a confused melee of people at many different points, in motion physically and psychologically, pushing in and out of ghettos, in and out of blind alleys, trying to cope with old foes and old problems while facing new pressures and new demands and new circumstances. There is no way of simplifying these complexities or of catching them whole except perhaps as the artist might. Yet as Ralph Ellison has said, the struggle for first-class citizenship for Negroes is but the first paragraph of the first chapter of a long story that has yet to unfold. Sluggishly or swiftly, now or soon, painfully but irresistibly, Negroes are moving up and out of the conditions of their second-classness, and this upward motion brings them face to face with new questions about themselves. What new transforming combinations are to come out of the changing conditions of life? What is to be made now of the Negro's uniqueness as Negro in the changing pattern of his identity as American? Out of the ghetto and beyond the veil, what indeed are to be the

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new meanings of being Negro in America?

The Negro became the most estranged, rejected, and alienated member of the American society, the man out of the whole American process. Inside his physical and psychological pale he concentrated mainly on surviving; he had to learn to live in a human setting hardly more hospitable than the natural environment in which his African kin had to learn how to survive. He managed it partly by devices of accommodation and partly by abrasive resistance. Deep inside he lived as he could; at the outer gates he pushed and fought and performed prodigies of counter-assertion, pushing out and being pushed back again. This went on and on until only yesterday when, as he pushed with increasing force, the battered and quivering gates in front of him began to collapse, brought down finally by winds that had begun to blow in hard from far away. Outside that gate waited no easy ascent, no goal clearly in view, but a steep cliff still separating yesterday from today, a future for which he still had to fight step by step and which faces him now in a blur.

Appearing over these fallen and falling barriers is a figure being called the "New Negro." This is a recurring term meaning essentially a newly militant, newly self-assertive Negro who will no longer submit to the humiliations of the past. There have been such Negroes in every generation, and there is nothing really "new" about them at all. What is new is that today's "New Negroes" are appearing in a situation where for the first time the odds are with them; their newness, their militancy, and their self-assertion are bound at last to pay off. A muralist trying to picture Negro Americans now would paint in the Southern students who began writing their own climactic chapter to this history with the sit-in-movement of 1960, the plain men and women of Montgomery who walked, the young adults who have led the way into the white universities of the South, the "new" young Negro with the brawny spirit represented by James Meredith of Mississippi, the children who have walked the gauntlet into their desegregated classes, their parents, the NAACP lawyers and their supporting organizers and workers, the new young ministers in the old Negro churches. All together they make still a painfully thin vanguard of people who are where they are because a still smaller but even more persistent band of predecessors fought for half a century to open the roads they travel now, all of them carrying a tremendous weight of commitment, not only pushing against a great and resistant society in front of them but also pulling a great and sluggish mass behind them. These are the people who believe that there is a self-respecting status for them to win in the American society and that they are at last winning it. Because they believe this is so, the young Negro novelist Julian Mayfield, who does not believe it, has called these Negroes in sad and bitter words, "the last defenders of the American dream."

Victory comes in sight, but it comes late and it comes slowly. It comes, moreover, not because the democratic creed, much less the Christian, is triumphing at last but because the white world is forced to change its ways out of fear for itself. I remember the late Franklin Frazier, a few weeks after the 1954 school decision, putting it in his own bald and bitter way —I edit only slightly: "The white man is scared down to his bowels, so it's be-kind-to-Negroes-decade at last." The victory approaches so late and for so many "wrong reasons" that for many it begins to bear the visage of defeat. More, it comes here and not there, for some but not for others, enough to end forever the old submission but not enough to assure a new freedom. The changes bring on resistance from the racists, and racist resistance brings on fresh episodes of violence, and the fresh violence strains to breaking the patience of people already strained beyond all reasonableness. Every gain is partial, and

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some hand is always there to try to take away what some other hand has "given." A reluctant or timid white liberalism clings to "gradualism" in a situation where slowness has become failure. The longer the process stretches out, the more stubborn the resistance within pockets of the white society, the more the issue gets wrapped up in the nation's embattlement for survival as a power in the world, the greater the disarray and disorientation, the greater the cynicism rising hard and ugly, especially among young Negroes who emerge to find the fruit of the struggle rotten. Instead of a relieving sense of achievement with every advance, in some a new kind of despair rises side by side with hope, often in the breast of the same person, bringing with it a new uprush of alienation: if I am really never going to get *in,* a man says to himself, then let me get the hell *out.*

There is surely no easy way *in* for the great mass of Negroes still trapped in their poverty. They have moved by the millions to escape it, from South to North, from country to city. But they have moved from rural to urban slums, into a process of decay and change which opens no early prospect of betterment for them. The economy as a whole is not growing fast enough to provide the expansion and multiplied opportunities that these masses of people need: the dead weight of even 4 to 5 per cent permanent unemployment in the system keeps them down at the bottom. The economy is moving, furthermore, toward automation which will narrow still further the opportunities open to labor with the lowest order of skills, again primarily Negroes. They will find themselves counted out as skilled and better-paid workers just as they are beginning in painfully slow numbers and against grim obstacles both in industry and the unions to find their way in. The solution for them is wrapped up in some of the most difficult and complex problems of the whole society, and it will not come swiftly, surely not swiftly enough to transform the lives of these trapped millions. They express their hopelessness and their alienation in all the ways familiar to the life of poverty: apathy, squalor, ignorance, degradation, crime. The energies and tensions that are generated find a few outlets in hoodlumism and violence; in the ghettos they break out into periodic explosions of targetless wrath. More recently they have taken the form of direct attack on authority, attacks by street crowds on policemen, always the prime symbol and too often in the black slums the actual perpetrators of the white world's violence and injustice against the black man.

THERE HAS always been around the edges of this dispossessed mass a fringe of cults to which people could turn to appease their despair. Two generations ago they turned in great numbers first to Marcus Garvey's dream promise of escape to Africa and then to Father Divine's offer of a nearby heaven. Although today's emergent Africa is much more real than Garvey's, it is a striking fact that the desperate poor have stayed with the religious cults and that the most newly successful of these is Elijah Muhammad's Black Muslim movement. This movement is oriented not toward ancestral Africa but toward a vaguely neo-Islamic or pseudo-Islamic tradition which has been present for a long time as a distinct strand in Negro cultism. Turning to a "Moorish" or "Arab" identity became one way not only to escape in fantasy from the oppressions of the white world but also to escape from being Negro. In the tiny cultlets out of which Muhammad's movement grew, the nakedness of the Negro could be covered with flowing robes, the nothingness of his past filled with the history of Islam, the emptiness of his life filled with a new content of dreams which had not been made or imposed upon him by the white man. At the far outer edges of Negro life such cults have long competed with the far more successful appeal of evangelical Christianity, but only in the last few years with the break in the power and prestige of the white

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world has such a cult been able to become more than an insignificant flutter at the fringe. Elijah Muhammad's movement lived a fitful life for thirty years or more in Detroit and Chicago but only in the last decade has become a national organization credited with anywhere from 100,000 to 250,000 members, with temples in some forty cities, and with an influence among urban Negro masses well out of proportion to its actual numbers.

THE MUSLIMS represent the current most extreme form of wanting *out,* out of America, out of the white world altogether. They recruit their members from among the lowly with a doctrine that declares the white man to be the devil himself doomed for his evil deeds. They demand total separation for themselves, asking for land to be carved out of the territory of the United States on which they would make a fresh start as the nation of black men chosen by God to embody virtue on earth. The Muslims call on the Negro American to cease being both "Negro" and "American." They reject the term "Negro" as the badge of subjection and seek to rid themselves of everything else that has come to them out of the white man's culture, including not only the names acquired out of slavery, but many of the other more bitter fruits of degradation and poverty. Muslim converts are "made over"—they abandon crime, dope, alcohol, prostitution. They acquire new habits of life, a new view of themselves and of their blackness, a new kind of militant self-respect which many other Negroes look upon with fascinated envy. Like Marcus Garvey, Muhammad appeals essentially to racial pride and separateness. His passionately violent indictment of the white world carries the ring of truth to almost any listening Negro, and his defiant rejection of the white society brings an involuntary inward assenting response from many otherwise not at all ready to accept the melancholy suggestion that their road to regeneration lies in black racism and in a total flight from the social reality.

But there are Negroes who are no longer caught on the deep undersides of the society who do not have to flee quite so far from reality in order to express their moods of despair and their impulse to escape. One finds them among the newly arriving youth, often schooled now up to the higher degrees, but no longer schooled in that peculiar quality of endurance that their elders acquired as a matter of course; or youths from whom the new opportunities demand more than they can give as individuals standing on their own, who cannot bear the frustrations of failure or rejection which might no longer be due to the fact that they are Negroes. From among these comes a new fringe of pseudo-radicals who retreat either into beat apathy or into a new brand of racial nationalism which gives them the chance to dream either of migrating to the new Africa or, preferably, of waiting right here to welcome the triumphant onrush of the newly rising tide of color in the world. But a certain despair visibly rises now not only among some youthful newcomers but also, far more poignantly, in older men weary of having to continue a struggle that they thought, for a brief time in the 1950's, might really at last be coming to an end. Here, spread thinly but meaningfully along several layers of the population, one comes upon the feeling that effective integration for Negroes in the American society is unlikely, impossible, or even no longer desirable. Many of the individuals who share this mood also begin to feel, like the Black Muslims, that they want *out.*

The young radicals are still but a tiny handful. The demonstrators at the United Nations at the time of the death of Patrice Lumumba in February 1961 brought some of them into the larger public view for the first time. That demonstration actually mustered only some 200 persons divided into several competing groups. When newspaper reporters went hastily looking to see where this "new" Negro radicalism came from, they found—be-

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sides the Black Muslims who took no part in the demonstration—a mass of groups and grouplets which by their own claims had at the largest 400 members and at the smallest 25, and added up to a grand total of under 2,000. Some of these were the heirs of the defunct Garvey movement, but others were new organizations created by younger newcomers to the scene. Some of these latter were "new" only partly in the sense that they brought a greater literacy and a somewhat more sophisticated tone to the little fringelet of black nationalism that had always been there. They were "new" most of all because, unlike the black nationalists of Garvey's time and spirit, they now had the great emotional overhead of change in America and change in Africa to feed upon. Unlike the lowly and more benighted, they do not need the dream world of Garvey or an Elijah Muhammad into which they can release their frustrations and angers. They usually deprecate the fantasies and the racism of the extremists, but they do not repudiate them. "Muhammad preaches black supremacy," one of the leaders of the Lumumba demonstration said to me in a conversation, "and I don't think there is any race supremacy, but I don't think we can give up any weapon. If we have to extol the virtues of being black, then let's do it!" Again, unlike their less fortunate counterparts in the slum streets, they do not have to strike blindly at white authority by throwing rocks or bottles at policemen on the beat. Out in the turbulently changing world they find all kinds of surrogates to deal their blows for them at the authority and prestige of hated white America, new heroes with whom to identify, hostility with which to associate themselves, struggles for "freedom" which they can join from afar.

UNLIKE so many of the radicalized and alienated youth of the 1930's who looked for political and social solutions, very few of these young people become supporters of the Communist movement. They do not join Khrushchev, they simply cheer him on when it suits them. They subscribe vaguely, as do most of the African nationalists, to "socialism," but they have no real commitment to any political or social ideology. Most of them know, moreover, what Negroes learned of old, that the Communists are politicians intent upon putting the issues of race at the service of their politics, whereas the black nationalist is much more intent upon putting whatever politics comes to hand at the service of race. Russian power may be the best and biggest instrument at hand for dealing out retribution to America, but it is still, for all that, white power. In the Communist world the affinities of the new black nationalists move rather toward the Chinese, who can be seen more and more as the most passionate and unswerving of America's foes precisely because their challenge is of the newly risen non-white against the white, and is addressed not only to America but to Russia as well. (Half a dozen years before American political pundits began to speculate seriously about this possibility, a Negro newspaperman I know was contemptuously brushing aside the immediacies of the Russian-American power struggle and predicting that the Russians and Americans would make common cause against China long before they would collide with each other.) But Mao Tse-tung is only one of a whole gallery of new heroes. The world is dotted now with the newly arisen dealing stinging blows at Western white men. The wreath passed in a few years from Nasser to Nkrumah to Sekou Touré to Lumumba—moving from one to the other as each of these new figures reached his own small peak of defiant cleavage from the white West—and above all to Castro, whose success in defying and embarrassing the American colossus made him a hero not only to these few pseudo-radicals but to much larger numbers of Negroes ready to cheer any challenger of white American power. Great crowds turned out to greet the white Cuban Castro when in pursuit

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of his own shrewd exploitation of the racial tensions in the United States he came to Harlem while attending the United Nations General Assembly session in 1960. Members of the Negro upper crust were invited to enjoy Castro's hospitality in Cuba, and not a few went in the initial period. "I very strongly doubt," wrote James Baldwin, "that any Negro youth now approaching maturity and with the whole vast world before him is willing, say, to settle for Jim Crow in Miami when he can . . . feast at the welcome table in Havana. And he need not, to prefer Havana, [be] pro-Communist or . . . pro-Cuban or pro-Castro. . . . He need merely prefer not to be treated as a second-class citizen."

ONLY A few of these new alienates have carried their alienation to the point of leaving the country. But a few have and while some still flee—as Richard Wright and James Baldwin and others did in the past—to the traditional expatriate refuges in Europe, the new world offers new asylums now and the younger crop of migrants have other choices; a few have gone to Cuba, some have gone to Africa. Their numbers are negligibly small—the best guesses in the summer of 1962 ran to a top of a few dozen—but they illustrate the fact that emergent Africa can and does play at least two roles for emergent Negro Americans. For the greater numbers who are moving purposefully into the era of more successful integration in the American society, it offers the added ingredient of a more realistic and more self-respecting view of their African origins and the chance of a new kind of relationship to Africa as it is now. At the same time, to those Negroes who either do not expect or do not want to become more successfully integrated Americans, it offers an alternative, a choice of a place to go. This choice includes taking on all the limitations, risks, and pains of exile but it is still a choice far more real than it could ever be when Africa was still part of the white man's world. The leader of one of these new organizations said: "We are primarily interested in the African liberation struggle. We do not participate in Freedom Rides or sit-ins or anything like that. We do not foster the struggle here. Our job is to win American Negro awareness of the African struggle." Then he added: "I am thinking of going to Africa myself to stay, and if I do, I will give up my American citizenship. That won't be hard. There has to be another way in the world. The United States just doesn't have it. There must be another way, and I expect to find it in Africa."

These young alienates are but few in number compared to the young Negroes who are fighting to break down the surviving barriers or to grasp hard the whole new world of chances opening to them in schools, business, and in government. They are likely to be fleeing from failures far more individual and personal than social and political, from fears that lie in them rather than in their situation, from a freedom they find terribly threatening. But even so, like the Muslims, they have a symptomatic importance of uncertain extent; they express openly and violently moods and feelings that are felt much more widely but are repressed, rationalized, or deflected. Frustrated Negroes are not the only ones, after all, who fear that Western white society is plunging toward some unimaginable hell, but Negroes in America do have their peculiarly equivocal status to resolve in their minds as they contemplate these prospects. Negroes of every estate have at one time or another exulted when some outside force has dealt white America a blow, have seen the Japanese, the Russians, or the Afro-Asians at the UN as acting somehow for *us* against *them,* and at every crisis in our history for half a century they have had to steady themselves with reminders about which, after all, was which. The deep and abiding identification of Negroes with America that has been maintained despite these feelings has had to persist in the face of the society's deep and abiding refusal to

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identify itself with Negroes. This has been cause enough in itself for despair to overcome not merely angry young men but mature and thoughtful and courageous men and women who have given the best of their lives to better themselves, the Negro's estate in America, and the position of America itself in the world. Some of the best of men have been assailed by the impulse to give up, to withdraw, to seek an *out:* listen to James Weldon Johnson writing thirty years ago:

> There come times when the most persistent integrationist becomes an isolationist, when he curses the white world and consigns it to hell. This tendency toward isolation is strong because it springs from a deep-seated natural desire . . . for . . . a place in which refuge might be taken. We are again and again confronted by this. . . .

More than one man who, like James Weldon Johnson, had fought the hard fight all his life has been confronted by this same despairing fatigue in the years since the school decision of 1954. They dared hope that the long struggle had come at that point to its climax. In a way, of course, it had; it finally committed the federal government and the nation to a fundamental change in its racial behavior. But what followed was not immediate compliance and enforcement but temporizing, resistance, the flouting of legality, compromise, and the seeming settlement of the "moderates" for token desegregation —7 per cent in the Southern and border states eight years after the court's ruling, hardly a comforting measure of the rate of change for Negroes in the society as a whole. Faced again with appeals for "patience" from "moderates" who often equated fighters for civil rights with the defenders of white racism as "fanatics on both sides," many a stalwart man began to feel a terrible weariness. Here is how one of the more prominent among them sounded in a conversation early in 1962:

> These last three or four years have left big question marks in my mind, making me wonder. I'm talking about the willingness to settle for tokenism which has eroded the whole business of compliance [i.e., with Court ordered desegregation]. There is some evidence that Negro organizations and leadership are getting fatigued, falling into the trap of moderation. Some of the criticism of the NAACP reflects the impatience of the folk Negro and the more articulate working class Negro, and the impatience of some younger middle class Negroes against this trend. . . .
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> This is all related to the increase of temporizing, like President Kennedy deciding to postpone civil rights legislation or holding off the housing order. Other things are considered more important. It is made secondary. Personally, I have become an "extremist" on this. I think the only issue with higher priority than racial justice is the issue of world and national survival. But I think these issues are one and the same. It fascinates me to see how this society can behave as it does. With the dominance of temporizing moderation, you get an erosion of moral strength. You get moral dry rot instead. If we accept the fraud of moderation on the racial issue, it corrodes and erodes our moral potential, and the moral strength allegedly inherent in the democratic system is really all we have got to go on in facing a formidable adversary in the world. Any weakening of this is a weakening of the whole. This is the dry rot. Either you cut it out or you won't have a tree very long.

He went on to say that he felt a deepening discouragement in others as well as in himself.

> I think it is pervasive, the pro-Castro business and so on, and frankly, I don't know where it will stop. There is a disturbing and common appearance of this among some of our most successful Negroes. They try to use the symbols of success as a substitute, hiding their feelings under conspicuous consumption or other superficial things. But when such a man stops and thinks, he finds a deep and horrible despair over what it means to be a partial human being. Maybe only a physically handicapped person comes close to knowing what this feeling is, but he does not have a social and legal conspiracy all around him to make him feel unwanted. You can be enormously successful, but still not feel respected in the crucial aspects of your being, still always looking over your shoulder. . . .

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There was a long pause and then, musingly, he went on:

> One of my best friends, an extremely successful man, bought a home for himself in Jamaica recently. I have felt the pull of this myself. It's a feeling of escape, sure, but one hopes not into nothingness. Thurgood Marshall once said to me: 'You get awfully tired trying to save white folks' souls!' Myself, I'm tired of being a prisoner of the idiocy of American racism. I find myself flirting sometimes now with the idea of just getting out of it.*

It is too soon to know whether the disoriented cultists among the poor, the angry young men among the better-off, or the tired older men among the fighters for civil rights are some of the last casualties before victory or harbingers of greater defeats to come. But however they may tip the measures of hope and despair in the process of change, the change itself will obviously continue to take place. It will move with forces larger than individual or group emotions, depending upon the further path of the American economy toward growth or decay, the further evolution of the world's emerging countries toward open or closed societies, the further movement of the world's larger politics toward a less warlike kind of peace or toward some final kind of war. The room for optimism in all these matters is not spacious. But wherever these many intersecting lines may lead—short of apocalyptic catastrophe—Negro Americans of every condition and estate will still have to be redefining themselves and fitting themselves into new places in the society in the years to come. A few despairing individuals may migrate, but the great mass of Negroes will still have no choice but to see the thing through right here, wherever it may lead them. If the society opens rapidly enough to give enough Negroes in general the sense of being admitted at last to the elementary equalities open to everyone else, then the casualties of despair will remain low. If the society drags on, opening new opportunities only to a token few, despair and alienation will rise and force new dislocations far more damaging than any we can see around us now. Even assuming at best that the process of integration will speed up and absorb the worst of the pains of the transition, there still hangs over this process a great cloud of questions that every Negro is going to have to face and which not even the swift pace of our times will quickly burn away.

THREE quarters of a century ago when W. E. B. Du Bois at age seventeen moved out of the rejecting white world into a closed Negro world, he exulted self-appeasingly: "A new loyalty and allegiance replaced my Americanism; henceforward I was a Negro." Many Negroes listened eagerly to Du Bois for as long as he summoned them to fight to assert their Americanism; none would follow him when he eventually cut himself off from it. If now these unreconciled strivings are to be reconciled at last, if some measure of successful integration does finally offer the Negro a more tolerable life as an *American*, where will it leave him as *Negro?*

The goal of "integration," like "freedom" for the anti-colonialists, stands like a great shining blur down at the far end of the struggle road, drawing and inspiring all who fight for it, but becoming not clearer but blurrier the closer one gets to it. Each of these terms has a sufficiently clear and immediate political content: just as "freedom" in the colonial context means the end of alien rule, "integration" plainly enough means the free and open access by Negroes to the common rights of all citizens. But what then? In the ex-colonies freedom from alien rule has marked only the beginning of the struggle for freedom. Here the conquest of civil rights carries us toward those vague and shadowy places where all the new questions about the future of the Negro group identity wait for us.

* Even the distinctly undespairing and brawny-spirited James Meredith, invited by various African countries, has recently written: "If I can't live in Mississippi, I very definitely will leave the country."

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One view is that there will not be any Negro identity at all, that with integration Negroes will eventually disappear as a distinct group in the population. From some people this view comes burdened with the whole past and cloaked in despair. Here is how one doughty but very tired old man put it:

> I don't think the Negro has any future in the United States as an identifiable community. He will be increasingly absorbed. I don't believe the Negro will ever be accepted in America so long as he is a dark man. If he is not too dark, he may at best reach the position of the Jew. In some communities, the Negro professional man is already accepted much as the Jew is accepted. I see where the Gallup Poll showed that 38 per cent would vote for a Negro as President. If this is so, they are thinking of somebody like Ralph Bunche. They are not thinking of a black man. I think color makes the difference increasingly. White people in the North are getting readier to accept those Negroes who approach them in physical type. They need to forget or ignore a person's Negro ancestry. We are not going to wipe out the stigma of Negro ancestry. Taboos shift, but only a little, and these taboos make the stigma. In ordinary society a man might say, my grandfather was an Italian or a Yugoslav. Nobody is ever going to get up and say my grandfather was a Negro unless it is obvious and he cannot avoid it. When the Negro gets light enough, he will simply pass into the other world.

It is not difficult to recognize in these weary words the residue of self-rejection which is the Negro's heaviest legacy from his past. It gives to the prospect of integration the cast of an ironic outcome. A great many Negroes who for so long desperately wished away their Negro-ness, like the counterpart Jews who wanted to shed their Jewishness, were trying to become part of a world that so utterly rejected them that it reduced Negroes to subhuman status, and managed to annihilate six million Jews in a single holocaust. A few could escape by "assimilating" or "passing," i.e., by simply disappearing into the majority mass. But the greater number could not or would not disappear. Their answer had to be sought in integration, which was the promise of equality of status. But integration, with a jeering kind of irony, can seem to be offering little more than the same option to disappear; by getting rid of the *disability* of being Negro (or Jewish), one can try at last to cease being *Negro* without stealth or shame. Something of this ambivalent confusion hung over the efforts made in recent years by some Negro organizations to drop the word "Negro" from their names, like the National Negro Business League, the National Council of Negro Women (which actually voted to drop "Negro" and then voted it right back again), and the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church which did in fact change "Colored" to "Christian." These moves were made in a hopefully or wishfully integrationist spirit, but they could not entirely divest themselves of the quality of stealthy escape, a gnawing sense of a loss of dignity even in an act seemingly designed to help regain it. What this strongly suggests is that wherever integration leads a man, he is going to have to carry with him the memory and the meaning of whence he came. If integration implies the society's acceptance of a man, it also implies his acceptance of himself, including the name he bears, the color and physical characteristics he carries, the nation to which he belongs, the origins and history out of which he comes. Such conditions of individual and social health may lie dimly far ahead, if, indeed, they lie anywhere except in the dreams which reaching men allow themselves to have. We will have to wait to see, meanwhile, what the new circumstances do to the old patterns of rejection and self-rejection, what the new sortings of minority and majority will be like, what new shapes will be assumed by the old absurdities, what new reasons will be generated for some people not to want to be what they are.

There is of course a view held in a much more matter-of-fact way by many, that the Negro will simply blend into

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the society as all sorts of other groups of people have done in the past, surviving only as a strand or a cast in the common design. This is not a radical miscegenationist view but an acceptance of a process already long under way. The extent of physical blending that has already taken place, combined with three centuries of total absorption and involvement in the American culture, has made for total assimilation of another kind which is not a matter for a more remote future but is already part of our lives now. What Negroes have wanted and needed was not to cease being Negroes, but to cease being "Negroes," i.e. the possessors of an identity marked by their skin and their features which automatically and inescapably condemned them to total disability for life. They want to shed this crippling identity and to become free to move out as individuals onto the great common ground where all other Americans move, to cease having to struggle for simple access to the most elementary rights due them as members of the American society, to begin to discover at last what else besides repression life might hold for them, and what they might hold for it. This is what Negroes have meant and mean now by integration. It simply means being included in everything that everybody else is included in. The rest would be up to the free interplay of society, group, and individual, for this is what the American society ideally offers and must finally offer in fact to all its members: free scope for individuals to develop by their own gifts and for groups to exist within the society by their own vitality and by the needs they serve. This is the open society, this is pluralism.

But an integrated open society implies total freedom of movement across all lines. Successful integration of this kind unquestionably threatens the existence of closed parochial groups; the open society is the foe of all tribes. The groups that cherish their separateness do not fear it idly. The attractive power of the society at large is enormous for members of minority or excluded groups who feel stifled in their physical or psychological ghettos and whose struggle to be free is precisely the struggle to move beyond the narrownesses of the group to some larger coherence. Every despised and rejected group produces its own defensively ingrown values and institutions in which some of its members are glad to live their entire lives but which others find to be intolerable shackles. They want to live in a wider universe, not only without parochial barriers but without frontiers limiting aspiration or creation. The former become defenders of the inner way, the latter push out in search of the larger community. There have been many Jews of the latter sort wherever the society has allowed to all Jews a sufficient *Lebensraum*, an area large enough in which to live and achieve all the elementary goals of life, some decent well-being, without feeling hemmed in. The barriers that remain at the outer rim of such an area are for most people so distant and remote (e.g., becoming President of the United States) or so trivial (not getting into certain clubs or being admitted to certain resorts) that they do not impinge upon or restrict the ordinary rights and decencies of life. In these conditions the group continues to perform vital functions for its members. It provides institutions to defend the rights already enjoyed and, where required, to struggle to extend them. It provides a community that meets most of the ordinary demands most people make on their social life, religious, charitable, "cultural," or personal. It is, finally, the refuge and the asylum, the bosom on which the groupman rests most easily.

One of the advantages of this condition is the freedom it gives the individual to move out if he chooses to wherever his own bents take him and where, without "passing" and still wearing the identifying badges of his origin, he no longer functions primarily as a member of his tribe. No one thinks of Eugene O'Neill as an *Irish*

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writer, or of Frank Sinatra as an *Italian* singer, or of Felix Frankfurter as a *Jewish* judge, even though their identities remain perfectly visible and on appropriate occasion are duly acknowledged. Negroes being where they still are in our society, one still thinks of Marian Anderson as a *Negro* soprano, Ralph Bunche as a *Negro* public figure, Jackie Robinson as a *Negro* ballplayer. For the same reason of newness and uniqueness of his achievement, John F. Kennedy will still carry in many people's minds the automatic label *Irish Catholic,* but this is no longer by far his primary label or principal distinction. When the Andersons, Bunches, and Robinsons come to wear their group identity as incidentally as the Kennedys, Lehmans, or LaGuardias, it will mean that Negroes will have moved at last into an area where life, if not wholly without restrictions, has become more than tolerable. That is still a long way off. But that is why now, despite continuing virulent anti-Semitism and persistent prejudice and exclusion affecting Jews in various quarters of American life, so many thoughtful Negroes, projecting their hopes for Negro status in America twenty-five years hence, have said: "If all goes for the best, when that time comes, Negroes will stand in American society about where Jews stand now."

THE DIFFERENCES between Negroes and Jews may be so much greater than the similarities that entirely different paths of development may lie before members of the two groups. Nevertheless, with regard to the future shape of their group identity, Negroes now, like Jews, have to discover how much of the cement that holds them together as a group has been pounded out of the stuff of their oppression over the centuries. Will the cracking of their bonds also crack their group ties? Or is there something else that gives vitality and power of survival to their group existence and places its distinctive mark on what new shape evolution offers? Jews who fear for the survival of their group identity in a free and open society invoke the ethics of their fathers, the universals of their religion, or the defensive parochialisms of a new small nation state. What will a new Negro American group identity base itself upon? Upon some surviving measure of rejection under which every recognizably Negro face will remain a badge of apartness? Or some new distinction coming up out of the new place and new share in the community at large in the years to come? Upon the shared history and folk tradition of the long time of oppression, and if so, how maintained from generation to generation? On institutions that will survive the process of integration and preserve their separateness, and if so, which ones, and surviving on what basis? On color and physical characteristics, and if so, what color and what characteristics? On some new form of mutually prideful association with contemporary Africa or involvement in the shaping of a modern African culture? Or in the contrary circumstances of new alienation, on some African alternative as a way out of American hopelessness? Or some new racial mystique, like *négritude,* summoned up by black French Caribbean poets as a desperate counter to the powerful mystiques of whiteness? It is questions like these that wait for Negro Americans just beyond their ghetto gates.

These questions suggest only some small part of the complex turmoil that is only beginning now as Negroes in greater and greater numbers shed the burdens of *nobodiness* and take on the new demands and new burdens of what Martin Luther King calls *somebodiness.* All the elements of group identity, e.g., name, color, nationality, origins, will have to acquire new shape and new content. All the choices—alienation, assimilation, integration—will have to be redefined. Out of the recombining of all of these elements in a new environment, a new Negro group identity will begin to be formed, and so too will the new shape of the American society.

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MEYER LIBEN

A NOTE ON CHIVALRY

A Story

1. Introduction, With Jokes

Jokes. Ha! Ha! I am amongst those willing to become a captive audience (or whatever the singular of the word "audience" is), if only the joke is funny (not unfunny) and it is told well, either in the elegant *or* the embroidered style. A joke is a bit of folk art. Why scorn it? And the joke cycles—fascinating, are they not? Traffic jokes, psychoanalysis jokes. . . . Have you heard the mother-in-law joke?

> A mother-in-law gives her daughter's husband (son-in-law) two ties for Father's Day. Daughter, son-in-law, and children come to visit Grandma on this occasion, all properly dressed. Dad is wearing one of mother-in-law's ties. She opens the door, and says to him straight off:
> *"What's the matter, you didn't like the other tie?"*

Curiously enough (why curiously enough?) I have recently heard a number of other jokes in what I call the mother-mother-in-law-grandma complex. It is a recurrent trend. I have a sociological friend, he is in fact a sociologist, and I plan to ask him to explain this trend to me, in its urban-rural sociometrics, and all the rest of it. If I remember to, I will tell him the following joke:

> A woman is running along the ocean beach, and she cries: *"Help, help, my son the doctor is drowning."*

MEYER LIBEN has had a number of short stories in COMMENTARY. He is currently collecting a volume of his stories for publication.

—trusting that he (the sociologist) will be cognizant of the Jewish middle class prestige propulsions involved here, and not be unaware of the tragic status-destiny dichotomy which provides the atmosphere for this fine current joke.

Then there was that party a while back at a friend's house, and an elegant girl came in, I don't mean that she was elegantly dressed, but there was something fine and real about her, one of those absolute strangers you feel you have known forever and will continue to know forever. What a lovely, warm, and reassuring smile! And she brought into the room romance, I mean the coming into existence of so many possibilities, beauty to be sought and never reached, all those forgotten streaks of glory. It was something which the room needed very much.

You know how even the prettiest girl gets lost in a room full of noise and drinking, and then suddenly you are standing together, in all that noise, all that (suddenly) lovely confusion, and she tells you, what? A joke:

> A grandma is wheeling her grandson; an acquaintance looks into the carriage and says:
> "My, what a pretty baby."
> Says Grandma:
> *"You should see his picture."*

We discussed the formal problems raised by the last line of this elegant joke. There are possible variants: *"You should see the picture"* or *"But you should see his*

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picture" and we discussed these variants, seriously weighed them. Her smile was warm, reassuring, I felt very much at home, not so much in the house of this friend, this stranger, but at home in the world, once more at home in the world, this cold and bitter world, this monster of a world, I was home in a world suddenly made warm and reassuring, a glorious world, full of infinite promise, round and golden, a world in which it was no longer possible to fall off.

2. The Middle Ground

Let us by no means forget the great middle-ground of experience: the American Midwest, the Victorian novelists, Wednesday at three o'clock in the afternoon, the land lying between woman's breasts, all the forgotten working hours, and through the confusion of friends and strangers talking, for we were amongst friends and strangers, it seemed that she had a position with, worked for, earned her livelihood—was it with the B & O?—sounded pretty much like the B & O, an established transit corporation, no doubt one of the few corporate organizations which had in its title the name of a city *and* a state. It struck me as pretty odd that she should be *with* (that's a nice way of saying that you work for somebody) that she should be with an organization half-city and half-state, a kind of industrial mermaid. She was with them in a capacity, and you can spend an awful (in the sense of long) amount of time with a company if you are with them in a capacity, but it really wasn't so long, it just seemed long, because it's an everyday thing, you've got to be there or give an excuse, like a marriage that way, it's a way of paying for your leisure, but she spoke pleasantly of the task (not an ordeal at all), she was not amongst those who suffered in order to enjoy later, she gave the impression of enjoying the working day (but who knows?), caught it all up in that warm reassuring smile, the one mentioned in Section 1.

3. A Connection

At a certain point, between old friends and between friends newly met, there comes a pause, we are all acquainted with that pause: nothing is said, some are embarrassed, some are relaxed, some absolutely relish this pause (enjoy the embarrassment and upset by the relaxation). If the friends are old, and the pauses numerous and lengthy, well then the situation requires grave analysis. With old friends newly made, it is always possible to ask, as I now asked: "Do you happen to know Mr. Indleberg, who is connected with your firm?" "Certainly I know Mr. Indleberg, we are in different departments." "So you *know* Mr. Indleberg, he happens to be my brother-in-law's cousin." "Would that be your wife's brother, or your sister's husband?" "My sister's husband, of course." "Do you know him very well?" "I've met him exactly twice, on family occasions." "I don't really *know* him, not only are we in different departments, but the departments have no connection with each other." "I'd say that he's about 5′8″." "That's right, he's rather stout, somewhat stooped." "Obviously the same fellow." This is a way of making a connection to destroy a pause. Ah, Indleberg, wherever you were at the time (and it would have been nice if you were at a party, enjoying yourself) you surely never understood that you were being used, as a pawn, as a pause-destroyer, between old friends newly met, to establish, for a brief moment (as compared to a lengthy moment) a connection.

4. Surrounded by Sociologists

I yield to no man in my admiration for Thorstein Veblen, that genuine (as opposed to phony) eccentric, that hard-bitten Northwoods stylist, and I can read with pleasure many a page of Sumner, but I must say that my blood boils, my gorge rises (not necessarily in that order) when I see a pretty girl surrounded by sociologists. Seeing it now, it struck me as a kind of allegory, of the English language

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(why is a pretty girl like the English language?) in its purity, menaced by the killers of that language. By "purity" I mean the ability of the language to reach what is true and beautiful in experience, and to clothe that truth and beauty in appropriate images and ideas. By "killers" I mean those who smother the new-born truth and beauty (for truth and beauty are always new-born) by an apparatus, an effluvium, gobbledegook, words which have lost all relation to the object, to language itself. How to save her from the sociologists? I assume that she wanted to be saved from the sociologists (though she was chatting with them in a friendly enough way) because who would not want to be saved from the sociologists? Looking around the room (for support or for weapons) I noticed a set of the English Classic Poets. I picked one of the volumes from the bookshelf—the book was solidly constructed, weighed perhaps two pounds, and sharp edges. I determined to hurl at the heads of the sociologists these Classic volumes. What would be more fitting weapons, in this new *Battle of the Books,* with which to save this maiden, or in distress? I gripped the volume, got the feel of it, so to say, and then noticed that she had fled from the foul circle, and was wandering alone, in an aimless freedom. I regretfully put the volume back in its place.

5. Responsibility

It suddenly occurred to me that I was an engaged man! My fiancée was wearing an engagement ring, *my* engagement ring, there had been an announcement in the metropolitan papers, if not her picture, and only the date had to be set. My fiancée was visiting her grandparents in Kansas City, she is very devoted to her family, and she has an extensive family, mostly in the Midwest and the Far West. I realized (also suddenly) the *outlandish* and *irresponsible* nature of my behavior. True, my connection with the girl I had just met at the party (I didn't know her name, the introductions were slurred) had not even reached the flirtatious stage, we merely spoke to one another with a more considerable interest than you might statistically expect (equating interest with percentage of meetings over a given length of time), we merely looked at one another (the romantic mixing of the glances) in a manner which bespoke the possibility, circumstances allowing, that we might get into an involvement more personal than the next, though not necessarily very personal. Why, it was very possible, that on this very evening, at this very party, a number of people, meeting for the first time, were interested in one another in just the same way. And it was possible that my fiancée, off in Kansas City, if she were at a party, could easily become interested just so with a stranger whose name she had not quite heard. Nevertheless, it being a fundamental law of life that one thing leads to another, I thought that I ought to act more *responsibly,* for it is, if not a law of life, then a fact of it, that we can be *carried away,* and that would take me far from my fiancée, far from my engagement and prospective marriage (though no date had been set) down some turbulent river, into some unknown sea. In order to avoid this fascinating possibility (and responsible behavior, if it does not *have* to destroy fascination, can very easily chill or contract it) I determined to avoid this young woman, whose warm reassuring smile had carried me so quickly down turbulent rapids to unknown seas. I've only known her twenty minutes, I thought, and here I am engaged to my childhood sweetheart (I meant by that thought that I knew my childhood sweetheart ever so much longer). I was pleased with this truly responsible thought.

6. Indleberg . . . the old Razzle-dazzle . . . Contact-continuation

"He's married to a girl his own size."

"Indleberg's child once came to the office. He's a boy."

"When I last saw him," I said, "we

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discussed Red China, the four-minute mile, and the soul's immortality."

"He used to be in my office," she said, "that was before I was there, then he was moved into another office, then into another section, then into another division, and now I hear his name mentioned occasionally."

"He told me," I said, "that Red China would spill over into Soviet Russia *before* the 21st century, that the four-minute mile was in its infancy, and that he was working up evidence for the soul's immortality."

"He told me," she said, "that he loved his work, but wanted to retire."

"He drinks Bourbon on the rocks."

"He used to write with a ball-point pen."

"Did you know that he was married previously?"

"That's incredible," she said, "I mean, he doesn't give that impression."

"His previous wife," I said, "is now married to a man in the diplomatic corps."

"He eats tuna fish for lunch," she said, "with a strawberry float."

"He's sort of nice," I said, "he lets you say so many things about him."

"I didn't know we knew him so well," she said.

"We know him very well," I said, "and why shouldn't we? He's our oldest friend."

"Who?"

7. Kinds of Doing

To do for the sake of your living parents is filial gratitude.

To do for the sake of dead parents is ancestor worship; otherwise (if they be not parents) it is to honor the mighty dead.

To do for the sake of the work is dedication.

To do for the sake of dear ones is gratitude, for the sake of friends is love, for the sake of strangers is sacrifice.

To do for the sake of the future is alienation, and distrust of one's powers.

To do for the doing's sake is animal joy.

To do for truth's sake is nobility.

To do for God's sake is presumption.

To do for fame's sake is neurosis.

To do for money's sake is tragic.

To do out of fear is degenerative.

To do out of duty is necessary.

To do for beauty's sake is romance.

8. Romance

I lifted a volume of the Classic Poets. If I hurled it at the head of an offending sociologist, and thereby saved a maiden not exactly in distress, would that get me into the arena of Romance? This style of Romance is quite out of fashion, particularly in the metropolitan society which I frequent. Of course there are girls in trouble, there will always be girls in trouble, but the help they need does not seem to require courage, it might require understanding, it might require the scientific knowledge of a psychoanalyst (plus understanding), or it might require just simple friendship (as compared to complex friendship). The growth of protective institutions—police department, fire department, etc.—makes the old kind of courage irrelevant. The emancipation of women has helped to destroy the old Romance. The point is to save someone weaker than you. But men are in trouble, and are saved by women psychoanalysts. Nevertheless I gripped the volume, I felt as though I had the feel of it now, thinking that the old Romance is not dead, that Beauty will yet be saved. Man needs woman, so woman is in trouble. Beauty is menaced in all sorts of ways, by the ogre of uniformity, by the resentment of the ugly in spirit, by the cold Hell of mediocrity. I heaved the volume of Blake at the head of a sociologist (for she was once more in that circle).

9. The Fight

Angered by the unprovoked assault (for the man was unknown to me, so he mistakenly thought that it could not be personal) the sociologist retaliated, the struggle took the form of a fist fight. Neither one of us was particularly skilled in this form of struggle, but we fought

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fiercely, I for the reasons already disclosed, and he (not knowing the provocation) because of what he considered an unprovoked attack. It was the first fist fight I'd had in about ten years, but boxing is a skill which you do not easily lose. I began, as though this were an everyday occurrence, to use the old feints and combinations. Now the point about a fist fight is that in all probability no one is going to be killed or seriously injured, this is not a duel, not a struggle to the death. We both observed the Queensberry rules, did not hit under the belt, did not deliver the murderous rabbit punches, it was a clean bitter fight which we were both bound to survive. The overwhelming possibility of mutual survival naturally weakened the romantic conception. Nor was the spirit of Romance strengthened by the fact that the girl (whose name I had not caught) was unaware that she represented Beauty encircled as well as the purity of the majestic English language, likewise encircled and endangered. She may have thought that I was jealous, or more likely thought that I was drunk and irrationally combative, but I did succeed in breaking up the circle of sociologists. After some ten minutes of fighting, our host hurled himself in between us, cried that our behavior was absurd, and that any differences we had ought to be settled in a civilized way. "What's it all about?" he asked. "He threw a book at me," said the sociologist, "and for no reason." I refused to discuss the matter, but the fight having stopped (by the intervention of our host) neither one of us was anxious to continue, the sociologist because he felt that he had retaliated sufficiently (my eye was cut) and I because I did not want to continue in a struggle which was bound to be inconclusive (for nobody would be killed, though his nose was bleeding). But the girl was once more freed from the circle of sociologists, and catching her glance, I recognized my error in thinking that she was unaware of my motive, for she smiled at me most graciously. "This is plain stupid," said our host, and added, inconsequently: "You don't even *know* one another."

10. Our Host

Our host was upset for two reasons. The first reason for his upset was that he felt concentrically trapped: by his difficult marriage (that is, by his marriage), by the constrictions of his social and professional life, by the apparently irreversible loss of contact with his old friends, by time's tyranny, the slow erosion, body and soul. The second reason for his upset was the feeling that he had been too late to save the girl in distress. Feeling young in heart (the way dissatisfied people often do, having missed the great early experiences) he dreamed often (for Romance dies hard) of a woman who needed to be saved, dreamed of himself, strong, wise, wily, fighting his way to the heart of the maze, and taking her off to some place where life was forever real. That dream had died hard, but it had died, not altogether died, for he was young in heart, but for everyday purposes it had died. And he was upset (a third reason) because *I* had come to the aid of the girl in the grip of the sociologists. He was the only one in the room (with the possible exception of the girl herself) who understood that my act was neither erratic nor drunken, he understood that my hurling the book and the struggle not to the death which followed was an effort to save the girl, and our host was resentful that another had come to her aid, he bitter and unable to make the swift move (for it is the young hero who comes to the aid of beauty and the future).

11. Outside

Standing at a window in the moment before the coming to the end of the party, and then the end of the party, I looked out the window. The apartment overlooked the river, though up to this moment I hadn't at all felt that I was in an apartment overlooking the river. The river flowed silent and powerful towards the sea.

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Across the river the Palisades endured, in their ancient struggle with time and erosion. And in the obscure depths of the sky shone the steadfast stars. I indulged in the traditional melancholy reflection that we and all our chatter would soon disappear, but that this river and sea, these cliffs and stars; would go on and on. This is an absolutely inconsequential thought, I said to myself, because nothing follows from it. Thus I had apparently come to the conclusion that in order for a thought to be consequential, something should follow from it. These rather pointless reflections were interrupted by a remark addressed to me.

12. The End

"That's a glorious view," she said, and she smiled reassuringly. "Except for the fact that we're on the 15th floor," she went on, "it's the same view that the Indians saw 500 years ago." "The rocks and river endure," I said, but refrained from adding that *we* would disappear. The chatter in the room had died down. Most of the guests had gone. The host was wearily serving coffee to the hard core. The volume of Blake had been kicked into a corner. We heard someone tell the joke about the grandma, walking with her three grandchildren, who tells an admiring acquaintance:

> This is Albert, nine years old, the doctor. This is Stanley, six years old, the lawyer. This is Gordon, two years old, the accountant.

and: *"He is beautiful, but you should see the picture!"*

"Thanks," she said, looking at the book on the floor, in the corner. So she surely had understood my quixotic blow! for had I really meant business, I would have hurled the Wordsworth, a much heavier volume. "Your eye is cut," she said, and passed her hand softly over the bruised area. "It's only a superficial wound," I said idiotically, for I had never expected that she would touch me. Had her touch not been so soft, I would have been angry at her for touching me, but since her touch was so soft, I was not angry at her for touching me. I have known many people for ten years and longer, and we have never touched one another. There was a pause before the departure. "Remember me to Indleberg," I said. Her smile, following so closely to her touch, reassured me. The age of the Palisade cliffs was somehow not so impressive. "It will all be part of the *Great Memory,"* I said, thankful that she did not shake my hand, for she was leaving with a group (3 men, 2 women) and the other four were impatiently waiting. "It is a phrase of Yeats's," I said. "I know," she said, *"The last of the Romantics."* "That was a bit presumptuous of him," I said, "there will always be a last romantic." She smiled reassuringly. "Would you like some coffee?" asked our host. "I certainly would," I replied, thinking of Kansas City, of doing for beauty's sake, of the youthful Palisades. I picked up the volume of Blake and gravely replaced the book in its proper place.

IN FORTHCOMING ISSUES

What the Election Meant D. W. BROGAN

Jewish & Other Nationalism H. R. TREVOR-ROPER

Growing Old in America MIDGE DECTER

Industrial Society GEORGE LICHTHEIM

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NORMAN MAILER

Responses & Reactions

MARTIN BUBER'S *two-volume collection,* Tales of the Hasidim,* *has probably had a greater impact on non-Jewish writers—whether theologically inclined or theologically indifferent—than any other Jewish book of recent times. But the* Tales *have perhaps worked an even more powerful fascination on Jewish writers and intellectuals, and particularly on those who stand outside the organized Jewish community. Prominent among the latter group is* NORMAN MAILER, *whose informal bimonthly column on the* Tales *appears for the first time in this issue. Regarded by many critics as the most important American novelist of his generation, Mr. Mailer is the author of* The Naked and the Dead, Barbary Shore, *and* The Deer Park. *His other works include an autobiographical volume,* Advertisements for Myself, *and most recently, a collection of poems entitled* Deaths for the Ladies (and other disasters).

THE TRADITION of the Hasidim is naturally and passionately existential. It is a tradition which lives apart from the regular, grave, solemn, aspects of Judaism, which are the ground and tablet of the essentialist. Disraeli once made a speech in Commons to the effect that the most damaging mistake a conservative party could make was to persecute the Jews, since they were naturally conservative and turned to radical ideas only when they were deprived of an organic place in society. The statement is certainly not without interest, but may grasp no more than a part of the truth. It is more likely the instinct of the Jews to be attracted to large whole detailed views of society, to seek intellectual specifications of the social machine, and to enter precisely those occupations which subtly can offer institutional, personal, and legislative possibilities to a man of quick wit and sensible cohesive culture. The precise need of the essentialist, the authoritarian, or the progressive is to have a social machine upon which one can apply oneself. Later, having earned sufficient and satisfactory power, one may tinker with the machine. It is small wonder that the four corners of modern Protestantism are pegged on Judaistic notions, upon a set of social ideas given bulk and mass only by a most determinedly circumscribed conception of heaven, hell, divine compassion, and eternal punishment. For modern man, Judaeo-Christian man, the social world before him tends to become all of existence.

Yet if the Jews have a greatness, an irreducible greatness, I wonder if it is not to be found in the devil of their dialectic, which places madness next to practicality, illumination side by side with duty, and arrogance in bed with humility. The Jews first saw God in the desert—that dramatic terrain of the present tense stripped of the past, blind to the future. The desert is a land where man may feel insignificant or feel enormous. On the desert can perish the last of one's sensitivities; one's end can wither in the dwarf's law of a bleak nature. Or to the contrary, left alone and in fever, a solitary witness, no animal or vegetable close to him, man may come to feel immensely alive, more portentous in his own psychic presence than any manifest of nature. In the desert, man may flee before God, in terror of the apocalyptic voice of *His* lightning, *His* thunder; or, as dramatically, in a style that no Chris-

* Recently issued in paperback by Schocken Books in two volumes (*The Early Masters,* 355 pp.; *The Later Masters,* 352 pp.; $1.65 each).

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tian would ever attempt, man dares to speak directly to God, bargains with Him, upbraids Him, rises to scold Him, stares into God's eye like a proud furious stony-eyed child. It may be the anguish of the Jew that he lives closer to God and farther away than men of other religions; certainly it must be true that the Jewish ritual leads one closer to the family, the community, to one's duty, but does not encourage a transcendent vault into the presence of any Power or Divine. It is even possible the Orthodox ritual may have evolved out of some sense in the Community that the Jews had better not dare a rhapsodic and *personal* communion with God, not by themselves, not divorced from ritual, not alone, precisely not alone because they had such voracious instincts and such passionate desires for ecstatic union that they might burn with madness and destroy the race. Given their sober gloomy estimate of reality, they would find malaise and nausea in any communion with God which was too private. It would seem a condition somewhat obscene. This tension may even have helped to create their humor. "What of the *kinder* if I dance naked in the streets?"

THESE REMARKS are to offer background for a venture. Every other month in this magazine, a short story, or two, or possibly three, all very short, from Martin Buber's *Tales of the Hasidim* will be printed, followed by a terse commentary by me. Since the gravamen of my own most special ignorance may well be, "Do you dare?" I rush to provide an explanation, a capsule of biography. Seven years ago, riding the electric rail of long nights on marijuana, I used to dip into *The Early Masters* and *The Later Masters* and find some peculiar consolation —these pieces were the first bits of Jewish devotional prose I read which were not deadening to me. Out of the cave of history came a thin filament of the past, the first to which I paid attention.

But I break the capsule to offer the salt of quick detail. I had, of course, grown up in Brooklyn, my parents were modestly Orthodox, then Conservative. I went to a Hebrew School. The *melamed* had a yellow skin, yellow as atabrine. I passed through the existential rite of a Bar Mitzvah. I was a Jew out of loyalty to the underdog. I would never say I was not a Jew, but I looked to take no strength from the fact. What Hebrew I learned was set out to atrophy. I left what part of me belonged to Brooklyn and the Jews on the streets of Crown Heights. In college, it came over me like a poor man's rich fever that I had less connection to the past than anyone I knew.

Today, one does not feel necessarily more a Jew. One is rather a member of a new Diaspora—those veterans without honor of the Beat Generation. But I have a debt to Buber. I have a fondness for the Hasidim. There was a recognition those seven or eight years ago that if I had nothing else in my mind or desire which belonged to Jewish culture, that if I were some sort of dispossessed American, dispossessed even of category, still I had, I had at least, a rudimentary sense of clan across the centuries. *The Tales of the Hasidim* did not make me feel like a Jew, so much as they made me realize what kind of Jew I would or might have been two hundred years ago. I would never, no never, have been a member of the Jewish Establishment. But some bright trouble-making young Reb with a wild beard, an odium for ceremony, a nose for the psychic épée, and a determined taste for the dramatic in words, in writings, in acts, in the life of dialogue—that was not altogether impossible. For the first time in years I could quit seeing myself as a prime creation, some prize mystery dropped on earth void of antecedents. Granted the intoxication of a historic past (it is like an orphan discovering that in fact he has a beautiful mother) I spent a few days scribbling aphorisms on the endpages of the hard-bound Schocken edition I owned. Most of these remarks have that sentimental gnomic intensity which a literary mind vaulted too soon into religion will emit:

> Anxiety is the noise man makes as he flees his soul.
>
> False Humility: What man is so arrogant as to declare that his past works led people in bad directions rather than in good ones?
>
> Arrogance is better than indifference, for indifference is the drugged sleep of the soul, while arrogance is the record of a man's struggle against his soul, and by so describing it there may come the day when he will find it.

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They are half-tolerable at best, these pietisms; they are really funny: I was writing "soul" with the same fretful grinding of the jaws once used for proving the soul could not exist—something emetic about a good atheist turning into a high-strung saint on a flight of drugs. But one didn't know that then. No photographers were at hand. One merely felt beatific and too worshipful of sedation—the nerves were raddled. Once in a while, religious shafts and dark psychic clouds parted long enough to give an aphorism which was fair:

> We laugh when we recognize a great truth and in the same instant conceal it.

In fact, Buber was indigestible—I was finishing *The Deer Park*. So one had to quit. One left the *Tales of the Hasidim* alone. Over other years, they were used for blackjacking cultural bullies—"Oh, you haven't read *The Early Masters?* Oh."

Once in a while, one would return for a look. The *Tales* had a continuing charm. One could read them as one would turn to a poet who was mild but a favorite.

Along the way, I was seeking to shape some existential leaps into a bit of coherent philosophy. It was never easy. I seemed to have no intellectual tools but the adz and the broad axe. The point of departure, opposed to Sartre, was without a shiver, religious. There was the steadiest belief in Heaven, Hell, and Something Other, something much worse. Since the formal equipment for this structural voyage was as complete as a Beat poet's mountain pack, one found that the *Tales* began to take on a special character. They became the antiquated but conceivable vehicle for a small intellectual raid into the corporated aisles of modern theology. The Talmudist, that poor gun, was now unwinding his filament out from the cave.

With what a difference. The *reactions* to the *Tales of the Hasidim* will be the natural work of a non-Jewish Jew, an alienated American, an existentialist without portfolio. As such, obligatorily, they will have a modern, an irreplaceable value—they are document. As such they are entitled to appeal across the spectrum from A. Hays Sulzberger to Allen Ginsberg.

For sample, two short tales are put here with a garnish of comment. Normally the display will be reversed; greens will endeavor to grow from Hasidic seeds.

*The Soul and the Evil Urge**

The soul says (to the Evil Urge): "When you try to lead me left, I will not heed you and go to the right. But should you by any chance advise me to go right in your company, I'd prefer to go left."

Which is a way of saying that if you, Evil Urge, tell me to marry, my soul knows it is wise to remain in sin. But, of course, says the Soul, how may I distinguish myself from the Beatific raptures of the Evil Urge?

The Test†

Rabbi Yitzhak of Vorki once took his sons to see his teacher Rabbi Bunam, who gave each of them a glass of bock beer and asked them what it was. The elder boy said: "I don't know." Menahem Mendel, the younger, who was three years old at the time, said: "Bitter and good." "This one will become the leader of a great congregation," said Rabbi Bunam.

Or as St. Thomas of Aquinas said, "Trust the authority of your senses."

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* *The Later Masters*, p. 163 (paraphrased).
† *Ibid.*, p. 298.

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On Talcott Parsons

BENNETT M. BERGER

TALCOTT PARSONS IS, among other things, one of those sociologists who write very badly—I would be tempted to say barbarously if the word were not already so overworked with reference to sociologists. Having made this dutiful observation, let me at once make clear that I do not consider the opaqueness of Parsons' language sufficient reason for dismissing him as an obscurantist or as otherwise not worth the attention of serious students of society. Intellectual history is full of large figures who said important, influential, and sometimes memorable things in a prose, like Parsons', so cumbersome, ponderous, and involuted as to discourage all but the most dedicated readers—and even some of them. Few readers, I suspect, actually sit down expecting to *enjoy* Hegel or Heidegger or even John Dewey as they might sit down to enjoy the articles in *Encounter* or COMMENTARY or any general magazine of high intellectual quality. Reading Parsons is a burden, a duty, probably limited largely to two groups: to graduate students in the social sciences (especially sociology) who will be examined by their professors on Parsons, and to practicing social scientists who impose on themselves the responsibility of knowing what is going on "in theory." Others who come across his work probably do so as a result of hearing (perhaps through more readable sociologists) of Parsons' almost mythical dimensions as the Grand Theorist of social systems.

This he is. In an intellectual milieu dominated by empiricists, Parsons has been able to "get away with" (as he put it once, in an unusual moment of irony) Pure Theory. Without ever having done a major piece of what, today, sociologists would call "empirical research," he has reached the pinnacle of a profession which typically distributes honor primarily on the basis of achievements in research—or in interpretive syntheses of research.

*The Social Theories of Talcott Parsons,** a recent collection of critical and expository essays on Parsons, is the latest in a long series of honors which document his eminence. The book is representative in the sense that it rehearses the complex attitudes that Parsons, his work, and his position call forth from his peers. A result of two years of interdepartmental faculty seminars and public discussions at Cornell, the book contains nine essays on general and particular aspects of Parsonian theory, and concludes with a long chapter by Parsons himself which attempts, somewhat in the manner of Toynbee responding to his critics, to "answer" the symposiasts. Unfortunately, I cannot even hope to summarize here the corpus of Parsons' theoretical work. Edward Devereux's bare bones exposition, an essentially sympathetic one, and by far the most lucid treatment of Parsons' work that I know, by itself runs over sixty pages of the book. Nevertheless, it is necessary to say enough about

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* Edited by Max Black, Prentice-Hall, 363 pp., 6.75.

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Parsons' work to convey some hint of its scope and complexity.

For almost thirty years Parsons has devoted himself to the construction of a systematic theory of human action at a conceptual level abstract enough to encompass the analysis of culture, society, and personality—and all of their component "parts" and interrelations. In principle, nothing in the distinctly human experience of men should be beyond the grasp of the theory's explanatory force. At the very foundation of the Parsonian theory is the idea that human action is organized into *systems.* Systems, in turn, have two basic characteristics: the functional interdependence of their parts, and a fundamental tendency to maintain equilibrium against "disturbances" from both within and without. Personalities, for example, are systems of "need-dispositions" which tend to maintain a balance of "gratification-deprivation"; societies are systems of "reciprocal role-expectations" which tend to maintain their "boundaries" against environmental forces and dissident elements within. At the apex of the hierarchical trinity* of systems stands culture, a system of value-patterns—or symbol-meanings—with an inherent strain toward consistency. Institutionalized in social structures, culture provides the normative content of role-expectations; internalized in personalities, it provides the motive force for seeking the particular gratification of particular needs.

Each of these major systems comprehends smaller sub-systems; what is a system from one perspective becomes an "environment" of a sub-system from another perspective, and merely a "unit" of a larger system from still a third perspective. To complicate matters further, empirical systems are never *only* cultural *or* social *or* personal; these systems "interpenetrate" one another. While each is "*analytically* irreducible," any study of personality must concern itself with the social features of personality and any study of a social system must concern itself with the distinctive cultural features of that system.

In order for social systems to "survive," according to Parsons, they must "solve" four functional problems. (1) Systems have goals which to some extent must be *attained* if the system is to continue; (2) systems also have environments to which they must *adapt;* (3) at the same time, a system must solve the problem of its internal *integration* and maintain a level of cohesion among its parts sufficient to enable one to speak of it *as* a system; and finally (4), in solving these problems, a social system inevitably confronts a fourth and "latent" problem: it must maintain within its units the norms, the motives, and the values which energize these units, and it must manage the tensions which, somehow, seem to get generated. Historically speaking, as societies become more structurally differentiated, a kind of division of labor occurs, and certain complexes of roles and institutions come to be primarily associated with the solving of one particular functional problem. If one considers the whole society as a social system, for example, political institutions are primarily concerned with the first problem, economic institutions with the second, and the family with the fourth. (But when the family itself, or any other sub-system, is considered as the system of reference, it then is faced with solving all four of the problems, which it does by a further differentiation of functions among its own units.)

PARSONS analyzes social systems with the aid of his five pairs of "pattern-variables." These are pairs of opposing terms (affectivity/affective neutrality; specificity/diffuseness; universalism/particularism; quality/performance; self-orientation/collectivity-orientation) which characterize and classify the structural components of action systems.† In Parsons' view, orientations, roles, value patterns, and so on, can be characterized exhaustively—and then classified—by a combination of terms, one from each pair. For reasons he has never made entirely clear, Parsons insists that these variables (which are refinements of existing polarities in sociological thinking) are not continua, not matters of degree, but rather dichotomies

* Parsons has recently added a fourth system, which he calls "the organism."

† In his most recent formulation, to give an example of Parsons "at work," he has dropped "self-orientation/collectivity-orientation" as a "pattern-variable" and reformulated it—along with yet another set of terms, "instrumental/consummatory"—as an "axis of differentiation." This now moves the term to a level of abstraction which is higher, in Parsons' theory, than the level occupied by the four remaining "pattern-variables."

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of choice; as "independent dimensions," the variables force a "choice" between one term or the other; the nature of pattern-variables does not permit ambivalent turnings-in-both-directions-at-once.

This brief synopsis of the nature of systems, the four functional problems, and the pattern-variables does not even begin to suggest the weight of the conceptual baggage borne by the Parsonian freight nor the tortuous logical track down which it huffs and puffs and occasionally roars. I hope, however, that it conveys some sense of the enormous reach of the theory and the stratospheric level of abstraction at which the theory's concepts are formulated. For it is the level of abstraction at which Parsons works which is the primary source of both the high praise and the negative criticism he has received from his colleagues.

THERE IS PLENTY of both in *The Social Theories of Talcott Parsons*—although, as is characteristic of symposia, considerably more of the latter than the former. William Foote Whyte, professor of industrial relations at Cornell, examines the relevance of Parsonian theory to the study of formal organizations (an area in which systematic theory should be most applicable) but finds virtually no help: "By failing to deal in any adequate way with data that are abundantly observable and measurable, Parsons has chosen to erect his theoretical scheme on quicksand." Henry Landsberger, an economist at Cornell, also writing on Parsons' organizational theory, is much more impressed than Whyte, but still he finds a vagueness in some of its basic concepts and a lack of clarity in the underlying purpose of the theory. One is left, he feels, with a set of categories and "mechanisms" but no real theory: "When judged against the goal Parsons has set for himself, one [*sic*] cannot but feel that the deficiencies at present exceed the achievement, and continued progress is by no means assured." Urie Bronfenbrenner, a psychologist, compares the Parsonian theory of identification with Freud's —and with O. H. Mowrer's revision of Freud—and finds Parsons seriously wanting: "By and large it has been difficult to discern much that is fundamentally new beyond the terminology . . . either he restates in even less precise language ideas that are already familiar . . . or he offers conceptions which, though provocative, are so diffuse that the basic tasks of theory construction have to be performed by the reader himself." Where Landsberger feels that there is no real theory in Parsons, Max Black, a logician, feels that there is, but that it is basically a theory of "statics," and he doubts whether it can generate any causal propositions. Black also raises fundamental questions about the source of the Parsonian categories, the meaning of *general* theory (which Parsons frequently italicizes), and the nature of the pattern-variables—which he doubts are either exhaustive or dichotomous. Alfred Baldwin, a Cornell psychologist, examines the Parsonian theory of personality cautiously because he thinks that any final evaluation of it "must await relevant data," and although he admires Parsons' emphasis on the interaction of personality and social systems, he nevertheless feels that Parsons' insistence on a systematic correspondence between the basic elements of personality, society, and culture—isomorphism, Baldwin calls it—inevitably "impoverishes" the concept of personality. "Need-dispositions," argues Baldwin, are not persons, and any attempt to treat them as such for theoretical purposes truncates the very idea of personality. Andrew Hacker, a political scientist, looks for the ideological taint in Parsons' scattered writings on politics, and finds it. But Parsons is not the conservative (at least in any practical political sense) that several critics have charged him with being; as a matter of fact, Hacker states, Parsons is and has been for a very long time a fairly typical liberal Democrat of the "egghead" variety. Yet in Parsons' theoretical emphasis on integration, equilibrium, and consensus, Hacker sees a built-in bias which has led Parsons to be overimpressed with the fact that democratic political systems of such enormous complexity as our own work *at all*.

If, then, as these critiques suggest, Parsons is biased, confused, evasive, turgid, unoriginal, and vague, how are we to account for the almost unbroken *respect* which characterizes most of the analyses? With the exception of Whyte, who shows a tendency to get impatient with Parsons, and Bronfenbrenner, who does let go with a little disrespect, these critics consistently extend to

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Parsons a sustained courtesy and attention which seems remarkable in light of the damning conclusions to which their close textual analyses usually lead. I said there was praise in this book for Parsons, and so there is, but one looks through these essays in vain for an intellectual basis for it. What one finds is reviewers' clichés: Parsons is interesting, provocative, stimulating, challenging, and so on. But these adjectives do not begin to reveal the nature of his eminence, an eminence so real that one still carries away from this book a favorable impression of Parsons in spite of the things said about his work; an eminence so palpable that many sociologists experience the visceral equivalent of a salute when Parsons passes among them.

THIS FAILURE to understand the real nature of Parsons' eminence is a failure at recognizing the criteria of judgment on which it depends. One of the going clichés in sociology is the view that theory is a "tool," justified insofar as it encourages and guides "fruitful" research. On this criterion, of course, the Parsonian theory is a conspicuous failure. Available in its main outlines for at least fifteen years, it has so far failed to produce a body of research of really impressive substance. In an otherwise excellent discussion of the general theory, Robin Williams, a sociologist, alone among the critics represented, chooses to defend Parsons' utility in this respect; but all he can cite are three or four research reports scattered in the professional journals, an unpublished study in Kansas City, and a much overpraised book on the analysis of roles. There *are* a few others, but like the ones that Williams cites, they are, curiously, not the work primarily of Parsons' impersonal readers but of his students and collaborators. This suggests, of course, that a good part of Parsons' influence is *personal;* one is told that he is a brilliant teacher, and a substantial number of the foremost American sociologists have passed through his classes at Harvard. I think, in fact, that a really full intimacy with Parsons' thinking almost *requires* becoming a close colleague or collaborator, or else demands so heavy an investment of time and intellectual energy that the student, having made the investment, may be reluctant to conclude that his time and energy might have been rather better spent.

Parsons nonetheless remains, as the dust jacket of this book states, "America's most renowned social theorist." Virtually alone among American sociologists he tries (however imperfectly) to satisfy the hunger of serious sociologists everywhere for "a systematic theory" at a level of abstraction applicable to all human societies at any time anywhere. The fact is that for the past twenty years systematic sociological theory in the United States has been little else than a dialogue with Talcott Parsons. And this fact is both sufficient warrant for the respect with which he is currently regarded, and evidence of his profound influence on sociological thinking. By his sustained theoretical efforts, he has maintained among sociologists a sense of the great intellectual tradition—Saint-Simon, Comte, Marx, Durkheim, Max Weber—in which they stand, a sense easy to feel slipping away as one goes about one's workaday research at levels of abstraction—usually low—dictated by the positivist criterion of operational definitions of variables. And in 1937 Parsons earned his right to a place in this tradition (how important a place can only be a matter of opinion at this time) when he published *The Structure of Social Action,* still his best book, and still unmatched as a statement which places the body of ideas called sociology in the context of the history of social thought.

To suggest, as several of the critics in this book do (indulging themselves in another of sociology's clichés), that we must withhold judgment on Parsons because "all the returns are not yet in" is to be less than candid because nobody really believes that the returns will ever all be "in." For systematic theory, at the level which Parsons attempts it, is not the "heuristic" act of a toolmaker, to be judged by the quality of the goods it produces; it is the goods itself, a great synoptic vision, an expressive act of the mind, a *Ding an sich,* and it is for this that Parsons is honored, and certainly not for any tools that, inadvertently, he may have fashioned along the way. Parsons' eminence (an eminence in my view more durable than one conferred by a set of significant correlations) is the eminence of a man who represents, in perhaps its purest form,

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"the sociological perspective," a distinct way of looking at the world.*

Having said this, I must go on to say that, as a comprehensive, scientific theory of human behavior, Parsons' own particular vision still seems to me, as it does to most of the contributors to the symposium, seriously inadequate. Max Weber once said that when it came to matters of religion he was "unmusical." Parsons seems "unmusical" when it comes to matters of power, conflict, and disorder. One feels that, to Parsons, *anomie* is something he has read about in Emile Durkheim and hence knows exists, that conflict is something a very important thinker like Marx wrote a great deal about and which Parsons consequently must "take account of." I do not mean to suggest that one must eat human flesh in order to understand cannibalism, but when Parsons talks about political power and conflict, as he does (sometimes quite acutely) in occasional essays, his comments, as Hacker suggests, sound like something grafted onto the body of the theory rather than being a natural outgrowth of it—analogous to Marx's "Hague Speeches" in which the man who was not a Marxist blithely tore a ragged gap in the fabric of his theory of revolution with the bland admission that under certain conditions workers can attain their ends by peaceful means. When, on the other hand, Parsons speaks of order, integration, function, the theory is not only logically impressive but *felt* as well; and this "emotion" is the source of the theory's occasional sharp insight, and even charm. His much-celebrated analysis of medical practice is a case in point. As Devereux points out, who else but Parsons would wonder why a child has two parents but a patient has only one therapist? Given the obvious parallels, the lack of "symmetry" disturbs Parsons.

Parsons' work illustrates the difficulties of trying to erect a general theory on the basis of "solving" a relatively specific problem. As several of his commentators have noted, Parsons originally set out to "solve" the problem of order—the so-called "Hobbesian Problem." On the whole I think that Parsons' solution is a pretty good one; it is, as a matter of fact, *the* sociological answer: social order is possible because men have culture, a set of values which are institutionalized in social structures, "internalized" in personalities and experienced there as motives and constraints. Culture, in the final analysis, emerges from the interaction of living beings—which is the justification not only of the novel and the drama but also of the experimental study of small groups. But to apprehend the nature of social order exhausts neither the data of society nor the powers of sociology; for "society" is not, as the Parsonians suggest it is, coterminous with processes of social cohesion, and the study of society is not circumscribed by the phrase "the structure and functions of social systems." "Men, to be sure, live together," wrote Ortega y Gasset, "but their living together cannot truly be called a society. It is merely an attempt or an effort toward becoming one"—an effort, he might have gone on to say, whose apparently inevitable lack of complete success suggests that the effort may be a fundamentally ambivalent one. At every point of human interaction the socially binding constraint of cultural norms may be countered and diluted by inequalities of power, opposition of interests, and even by an unleashed *id* (which, as Lionel Trilling once observed ironically, may be the last stronghold of individuality in a sociological world).

PARSONS HAS continually claimed that this kind of criticism is not only unjust but ideologically inspired. Conflict, change, unruly disorder, *can*, he argues, be adequately "handled" within the structure of concepts he offers. In his rebuttal to Hacker here, he points out that change in the very structure of a system may be functionally necessary if the system is to cope with changes in its environment. But environments are systems too, and the source of changes in them (other than an organic, evolutionary sort) remains a theoretical mystery. Ten years ago

* I am not at all sure that Parsons would accept this as the high praise I intend it to be. He sees his work not as a contribution to the history of ideas but as a scientific theory of action in, as he would say, "a quite technical sense." He might even think it impertinent that his work be reviewed in a general magazine—reasoning that it would be no more relevant to review him here simply because his subject is society and culture than it would be to review a technical manual on computer engineering simply because computers "think."

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Parsons tried to come to grips with his critics on this point by saying ". . . propositions about factors making for the maintenance of the system are at the same time propositions about those making for change. . . . *It is impossible to study one without the other.*" This statement has a deceptively convincing ring to it. It may be impossible to study one without the other, but it is quite possible to emphasize the conceptualization of one such that the other is reduced to the status of a residual category. Parsons would not accept his formulation if it were slightly rearranged by a conflict theorist to read "propositions about factors making for social change are at the same time propositions about those making for stability." Parsonian theory so sensitizes one to integration, order, and processes of self-regulation that conflict or other "disturbances" in the equilibrium of social systems can barely be discussed in other than pathological terms. When Parsons gives his attention to the phenomena of disequilibrium, it is almost always with a clinical vocabulary and with one eye on the compensatory, re-equilibrating forces that the system will bring to bear in order to restore "balance."

Parsonian theory, in short, conceptualizes only a part of the evidence.* It is one thing to see a society's subtle patterns of integration and reciprocity and the powerful armory of "mechanisms" it has at its disposal for dealing with potential threats of disorder (sometimes repressively but usually co-optively); it is quite another thing to characterize these processes of stabilization as "the fundamental tendency of interaction." Societies have "tendencies" all over the place, and I find it no more nor less useful to assume that they have an inherent tendency toward equilibrium than to assume that they have an inherent logic of contradiction (as the Marxists do) which will be the source of their final downfall. There is, I think, considerable evidence to support both assumptions. As a matter of fact, I find it surprising that Parsons, who has taken over so much of Freudian theory at the sociological level, has not found it germane to introduce into his theory a sociological equivalent of the Thanatos concept. It is certainly no more mysterious than the logic of equilibrium, and, given the present direction of world politics, perhaps even more believable.

Robin Williams, as sympathetic a critic as Parsons could want, points out that "for the concept of equilibrium to have descriptive, predictive, or explanatory value, it must be possible to state a set of defining conditions specifying what 'balance of forces' is to be 'equilibrium' and what 'movements' will constitute disequilibrium. This, we submit, Parsons has not done." Until it *is* done, I do not see how one can speak meaningfully of empirical "systems." And there is considerable doubt that, at the level of analysis usual for Parsons, it can be done at all; for the very concepts (i.e., roles) which constitute the units of Parsonian social systems are themselves abstractions from behavior which is constantly changing—and not always within a readily identifiable "range of tolerance." On the other hand, it may very well be done at lower levels of analysis; it is not at all surprising that some of the best work done in systematic functional analysis has been done on kinship systems—because of all roles, kinship roles are probably the most stable and orderly.

WITHOUT FREUD'S lucidity and Veblen's bite, the virtually unreadable character of the prose in Parsons' major books will probably prevent them from ever circulating very widely beyond the boundaries of academic social science.† In fact, I would hazard the guess that fully half of Parsons' fellow sociologists do not know what he is about. But like Freud and Veblen, Parsons has that distinctive mark of a major social theorist: the capacity to corrupt the innocence with which we view those parts of the world that the theory touches. Having read Veblen, we can never again look at circular driveways and high heels and college gothic with quite the same innocence we did before; having read Freud, we see

* Reinhard Bendix and I have written on this more extensively. See "Images of Society and Problems of Concept Formation in Sociology," in *Symposium on Sociological Theory*, edited by L. Gross (Row, Peterson Co., 1959).

† In a superb example of understatement, Parsons says "I am not at all prepared to discount entirely the view that there are peculiar and unnecessary obscurities in my writing," and upon occasion he has apologized to his readers for what he once called his "terminological cumbersomeness."

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mannerisms as mechanisms, predispositions and aversions as syndromes, and we think twice about letting our three-year-old daughter slip into bed with us on Sunday mornings. Parsons, even more than Edmund Burke and T. S. Eliot (in his prose writings), gives to one a sense of the essential orderliness of society and culture with their profound resources for containing and absorbing disruptive forces, a sense of the adaptive genius, the "wisdom," inherent in the organization of social and cultural systems.

Certainly these are "conservative" insights; and, like most insights, they contain important half-truths the appreciation of which, it seems to me, can only strengthen more dialectically founded theory. But Parsons' half-truths have frequently been met by a hostility from radical sociologists not unlike the impotent rage evoked from anxious, aggressive people by the smug disdain and patronization exercised toward them by the psychoanalyzed. Radical sociologists blast away at Parsons, and he goes his bland way seeing "functions" everywhere. Fortunately, it is not necessary for the general reader to endure Parsons' attempts at formal system-building in order to appreciate the distinctive Parsonian sense of fit. We get this best not in his tomes but in his occasional essays on specific topics, most notably in the essays on age and sex grading, on the medical and legal professions, on McCarthyism, and perhaps especially in his critiques of David Riesman and C. Wright Mills—essays in which, unlike in his "serious" work, he is often as not quite lucid—lucid enough, in any case, to reveal the strengths and limitations of his theory.*

Parsons apparently prefers to be regarded not as a writer of occasional essays which, by virtue of his distinctive vision, illuminate specific problems, but rather as the creator of a scientific theory of action at the highest possible level of abstraction. And in his concluding essay in this symposium he polemicizes against fellow sociologists who doubt that the idea of "system" and its corollary, the principle of "equilibrium," are indispensable. Parsons' remarks here are revealing. Parsons believes that the attitude which denies the centrality of "equilibrium" is "symptomatic of the denial that social science itself is legitimate, or realistically possible." Now, if the model of what Parsons means by "science" is physics or even physiology, then he may be quite right in taking his colleagues to task. But if he is attempting to discredit sociologists who simply hold back from making any specific judgments about the ultimate shape of sociology as science, then Parsons is on much weaker ground. The eventual recognition of sociology's claim to the status of a science will depend upon the bulk and the importance of what it convincingly tells us about social life. "Convincingly," of course, begs the important methodological questions, but I think that those who are more enamored of the existing forms of theoretical and empirical science than they are of understanding social life contribute less to this eventual recognition than do those sociologists (and Parsons is sometimes among them) who, while not insensitive to theoretical and methodological problems, plainly manifest by significant assertions, tested or testable, the enormous promise of "the sociological enterprise."

A diffidence about the ultimate shape of sociology as science need not make one an inveterate debunker of sociological "pretentiousness." It does imply—and here I write as a "practicing" sociologist—what I hope is neither a false modesty nor an easy piety before the complexity of the task, and also a view which is more temperate than that of either the omniscient pessimists who think a science of sociology impossible or the omniscient optimists who think it is a science already.

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* All but the piece on Riesman can be found in one or the other of Parsons' two volumes of collected essays: *Essays in Sociological Theory: Pure and Applied* (Rev. Ed), Free Press, 1954; and *Structure and Process in Modern Society*, Free Press, 1960.

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OBSERVATIONS

CUBA & THE PEACE MOVEMENT

Nathan Glazer

SHORTLY BEFORE the President's October 22 speech declaring a quarantine on shipment of arms to Cuba and demanding the removal of Soviet missiles from that country, the New York *Times* reported on a dozen or more candidates for Congress around the country who were running, to a greater or lesser extent, on a "peace" platform, and who were accordingly being supported by some of the groups that form what is generally called the "peace movement." (The most prominent of these candidates—and the only one receiving national publicity—was H. Stuart Hughes, the Harvard historian who had been successful in getting his name put on the ballot as an independent candidate for U.S. Senator from Massachusetts.) The day after the President's speech, the *Times* also carried (and on its front page) a report on the first reaction to emanate from the peace movement—the decision of the Student Peace Union to organize an immediate march on Washington to protest against the quarantine as a provocative act that increased the danger of war.

This first reaction was soon followed by similar protests from other segments of the peace movement—Women Strike for Peace, the intellectuals associated with Turn Toward Peace, and those technical experts who form a kind of miniature RAND Corporation servicing the cause of disarmament. But the verbal statements and printed advertisements that flowed from these different groups seemed less likely to gain support than any major effort they had undertaken in recent years. Having performed the feat of staying clear not only of actual infiltration by Communist influences but even of vulnerability to the *charge* of Communist influence, and having managed, with a position that hardly one per cent of Congress would endorse, to remain nevertheless a factor on the edge of American politics, the peace movement now suddenly appeared, in its reaction to the Cuban crisis, as narrow and limited as some of the antecedent organizations from which it had sprung. The close contact of these older groups with diverse new elements under the pressure of the threat of nuclear warfare had led to the healthy transcendence of sectarianism and wooly-mindedness. But the Cuban crisis revealed that all the effort of the past three or four years to produce a viable alternative to the main drift of American foreign policy—an effort which many people had seen as a hopeful sign in American life—was in danger of developing a sectarian character of its own.

I use the term "peace movement," even though it tends to formalize what is informal, to refer to all those organizations and individuals who feel that the existence of weapons capable of destroying the world has made the traditional style of international politics both ineffective and too dangerous, and who insist that a new approach to international conflict must be found. Those involved in this movement stem from a bewildering mélange of political backgrounds—pacifism, socialism, anarchism, liberalism, fellow-traveling, and even conservatism. One of the chief resources of the movement, since it has been unable to make a significant mark either on the two leading parties or on big organized pressure groups like the unions and the churches, has been big names—Leo Szilard, David Riesman, John C. Bennett, Erich Fromm, Norman Thomas. Literary intellectuals and professors and students at leading colleges are also important sources of strength. On some campuses, indeed, the peace movement has become as strong a force as the American Student Union was in the late 30's (at Harvard, for instance, H. Stuart Hughes drew

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more votes in a student straw poll than Edward Kennedy*).

But the fact remains that in that body which, for all its limitations, still best represents the thinking and feeling of the American people—Congress—the ideas of the peace movement find only fitful expression. No more than a handful of Representatives have been responsive and even fewer Senators. (Senator Fulbright, who spoke out against the Bay of Pigs operation, has generally been a voice of reason and flexibility; unfortunately, however, he decided to stand with Senator Russell in opposing the President's blockade measures as too mild.) Even so, I have always felt that the strength of the peace tendency among articulate and informed Americans was actually greater than could be detected by any formal political measures. It was certainly not great enough to neutralize the pressures for intervention that were so strongly exerted on the administration during September and October. And yet when the President was forced again and again to reassure the people that the threat from Cuba could be managed, he must have taken some comfort not only in the Gallup polls that showed a majority of the country uncertain about or against invasion, but also in the knowledge that a thousand professors were ready to sign ads to support a peaceful stand.

The President finally acted and imposed a blockade on Cuba, not because of pressure from the right, but because the Soviet Union had changed the nuclear status quo by setting up missile bases in Cuba. As we now know, the President's sober and determined resistance to this step shook Russian expectations and created a more fluid situation in the relations between the great powers than had existed in many years. But the President's action did not shake the expectations of the strategists of the peace movement. For if the leaders of the Soviet Union, in deciding to turn Cuba into a missile base, were betting that the President would not fight in response to such a provocation, the leaders of the peace movement had been fearful all along that he would—or more exactly, that the need to make his willingness to fight credible to the Russians would lead him into measures which could easily tip us into war. A representative group of these leaders, including Norman Thomas, Seymour Melman (an expert on disarmament and its problems), A. J. Muste (a veteran pacifist leader), Robert Gilmore (of Turn Toward Peace), I. F. Stone (the journalist), and Carey McWilliams (editor of the *Nation*), articulated in a public statement the point of view that was most widely accepted in the peace movement. Behind this statement lay the elaborate analyses which have appeared in small publications like the *Newsletter* of the Council for Correspondence; for the peace movement has its own specialists in defense, and they—more than the ordinary run of politically sophisticated citizens—follow the Talmudic writings about what the Russians think we think they think we will do. "We believe, first," the statement asserts,

> that the President's order of a partial naval blockade on Cuba is an unwise move and one which clearly threatens the peace of both the Caribbean and the world. We believe too at this grave hour threats of force and coercion serve only to exacerbate rather than to calm this serious crisis. Such threats, in violation of our commitment to the UN Charter and the OAS Statute, fail to increase our own security while frustrating the very policy aims they pretend to serve. They are, in every sense, indefensible.
>
> . . . In our world threats of force are acts of suicide. In the midst of such intense crises the possibilities of war by accident and miscalculation, always serious, are multiplied a thousand-fold, while minor irritants take on the air of grave and novel provocations.
>
> Let the great powers resolve now to withdraw their nuclear weapons to their own borders as a first step toward meaningful general disarmament.
>
> We call upon the Soviet Union to cease now all further arms shipments of any kind to Cuba.
>
> We call upon the United States to end its new blockade and the old embargo directed at Cuba and to move as well to normalize relations with the present Cuban Government. We call upon the Cuban Government to declare itself a

* In the election itself, however, Hughes only compiled a vote of 49,102—2 per cent of the total number of ballots cast. This showing was a disappointment to many in the peace movement who had expected Hughes to reach 100,000 or more, and who now think that Cuba gained votes for Edward Kennedy that might otherwise have gone to Hughes.

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neutral state and to place itself under the protection of the General Assembly.

We call upon the political leaders in our own country to respect the wishes of our people, as indicated in so many recent reports, and to reflect in word and deed their desire for reduction of Cuban-American tensions.

Finally, we call upon the Soviet Union and the United States to use the immense resources now consumed by the weapons of war to contribute to the well-being . . . of the underdeveloped world.

This statement is founded on a series of well-developed convictions: that threat of force by one of the two great powers can only result in a stiffening of resolve on the other side and a concomitant adoption of even more inflexible policies; that the images the two powers hold of each other—their leaders as well as their peoples—are so suffused by fear as to make the slightest concession very difficult and prevent the perception of opportunities to reduce tension by acts of confidence and accommodation; that both sides are not only equally fearful but also equally desirous of peace, and that consequently the first one to express that desire by freely softening its belligerent posture may stimulate a corresponding response in the other. Thus an ascending spiral of rigidity, false perception, unreason, and fear, leading to war, may be replaced by a mounting cycle of flexibility, true perception, reason, and confidence, leading to peace.

AN ACTION softening the military posture for the purpose of communicating a true desire for peace to the other side is called a unilateral initiative. The term was coined by the psychologist Charles Osgood, who has also done the most work in developing the idea. Other psychologists like Jerome Frank and Erich Fromm have contributed too, as has David Riesman, who, while he is not professionally a psychologist, has of course been deeply concerned with the question of how perception of self and perception of others can affect behavior both in individuals and in nations. This is not to say that the ideological position of the peace movement is purely the work of psychologists; indeed it should be emphasized that none of the people mentioned in this paragraph was among the signers of the statement I have quoted. But the psychological influence has undeniably been strong, and the statement quoted above can be seen as a fair expression of the central tendency of peace movement intellectuals to think in terms of unilateral initiatives.

The idea of unilateral initiatives, it should also be emphasized, better defines the orientation of the contemporary peace movement than the idea of unilateral disarmament, which its enemies—mistakenly assuming that everyone in the peace movement is a pacifist or that the movement as a whole is committed to pacifist principles—often accuse it of holding. Such unilateral initiatives, it is argued, can be indulged without endangering our security because the potentiality for "overkill" on both sides is so great. But what if the steps we take to soften our military posture, as a sign that we truly want peace, are not reacted to in kind by the Soviets? The peace movement's answer is that we must try again and again, up to the point at which we still retain a minimally effective nuclear deterrent (though there are differences of opinion within the movement as to where that point lies). This repeated effort is necessary because the only alternative is bound to be an increase in rigidity culminating in a situation where—as the statement points out—the awful weapons, through accident or miscalculation, come into use.

Conceivably, Khrushchev's startling withdrawal has begun the spiral of flexibility and mutual confidence that the peace movement wishes to promote; conceivably, the Cuban crisis has convinced both sides that the one impermissible thing in the competition between the two powers is a radical change in the status quo (Russian military power is still contained within the borders established in 1945); conceivably, as both President Kennedy and Khrushchev have said, the chances of successful negotiations on the atomic test ban and even on disarmament have been enhanced by the fact that for the first time, and to the amazement of everyone, a rapid and decisive and reasonable exchange between the U.S. and the USSR has been shown to be possible. The President told the Russians that they had done something we would not stand for and that they must now undo it; and to the astonishment of the whole world, Khrushchev, after some

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fumbling and fuming, agreed that he had really gone too far, and said that he would withdraw.

But if reason, or greater reason, has entered into the international dialogue, if a decisive conversation on an issue carrying the threat of war could be concluded between the United States and Russia in *one week*, to what should this be credited? Just to what the strategists of the peace movement thought would increase unreason and fear and make dialogue impossible: an actual use of force, combined with a threat of force. To be sure, both the use and the threat were carefully and—as it turned out—brilliantly calculated in scale to match the size of the provocation. Thus we can say that restraint was an important factor, but it was restraint applied within the terms of force and not outside them. In the years before the Second World War, it was argued on the evidence of World War I that an arms race must necessarily lead to war. Yet was it an arms race that led to World War II—or was it rather the failure of England and France to race fast enough, to show enough determination to use force in defense of their interests? In 1939, the American Socialist party refused to take sides in the war—it was neutral; in October 1962, the Socialist party again blamed both sides—and the only interest in the news item was the peculiar shiver it sent up the spines of those of us old enough to remember back to 1939. The leaders of the peace movement, like the Socialist party, found it impossible to distinguish between Khrushchev's attempt to upset the status quo and Kennedy's determination to restore it; or if they saw the distinction, they did not consider it important. And the reason was that they had for so long been attempting to understand the Cold War, and to discover a way out of it, in terms that equated the two contending sides: both were equal in fear, both were equal in the desire for peace. This much was perhaps not far from the truth, but the setting up of equivalences in other matters carried the movement somewhat further away from the truth. The belief that each side has equally misperceived the other, and that the proportion of expansionist and belligerent as well as status quo and pacific forces within each nation has roughly been equal, led, among some of those who had so passionately argued for so long in defense of this view of the world, to quite radical misperceptions of their own about the way the Soviet Union makes policy, and the aims its policies are directed toward achieving.

These errors were of course committed in the process of a humane and intelligent attempt to work out a policy that could successfully avoid war, and they are in no sense comparable to the errors of the warmongering yahoos who are incapable even of thinking through the immediate consequences of the invasion they scream for. (One would think that Malaya and Algeria and Vietnam did not exist for them, so eager do they seem to embark on another costly and exhausting effort to destroy Communism with alien military power.) Moreover, the Cuban crisis, far from proving that the interpretations of the peace movement were all wrong, actually confirmed certain things that many writers associated with the movement have been emphasizing—the view, for example, that there is conflict, uncertainty, indecision, and a good deal of stupidity within the Kremlin, and that we therefore have an opportunity to work toward strengthening the forces of reason and accommodation and weakening the forces of recklessness and intransigence which contend for influence in Moscow as surely as they do in Washington. But it turned out that the forces of reason in Russia—if that is indeed what they are—were brought to the fore not by a policy of unilateral initiatives on our part, but by precisely the opposite. Russian recklessness slyly tried to alter the status quo, and American determination to frustrate this attempt elicited Russian reasonableness.

So FAR AS the political appeal of the peace movement is concerned, it is unfortunate that it could not bring itself to adequately perceive the differences—the real differences—between the Soviet Union and the United States in a case where they became so clearly visible. The President did not threaten to wreak destruction on Cuba, as Khrushchev so often has threatened to rain missiles on England, France, Italy, Turkey, Japan. There were certainly enough Americans who would have spoken just as Khrushchev has done in the past, but they were not making our national policy. Kennedy's

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policy not only avoided war, but it gained ends far beyond what anyone could have hoped. Who would have thought he would get off so easily—without concessions of advantage, without months of painful negotiation, and with only a promise (highly desirable anyway) not to invade Cuba?

Now that the situation seems to have become fluid, however, now that there seems to be a slightly greater hope for negotiation, is it the tough posture that will lead to results—the insistence on the status quo in Berlin, the refusal to give away what we have (bases in Turkey, for instance) unless we get real advantages in return, and the determination to maintain the borders of the non-Communist world exactly where they were drawn seventeen years ago? Or does the course of unilateral initiatives offer a better hope of avoiding nuclear war?

This question need not be considered only in the abstract, for something which to my mind is very much like a unilateral initiative was recently tried by the United States, and if we can isolate the reason for its failures, we may be able to arrive at a sounder basis for judgment. I refer to Kennedy's decision, shortly after he became President, to press strongly and honestly for a ban on atomic testing, even though we were much better prepared (so far as we knew) to undertake underground testing than the Russians. Here was an issue on which agreement seemed to be possible, an issue vitally affecting the health of the world, and vitally affecting the crucial problem of the spread of atomic weapons to the so-called *n*th power. There was no doubt whatever of the President's willingness to offer concessions, to meet the Russians more than halfway on the points that had previously prevented agreement (the number of inspection stations, for example). And what was the Russian response? The Russian response was a brutal refusal to countenance any agreement of any sort; the breaking of the three-year moratorium; the explosion of fifty-megaton bombs—and then boasting about it; and renewed threats to destroy the democratic countries. What could one do with all this? The only thing anyone could do was, with fear and trembling and determination, to try to restrain them and make them see reason. Yet what did the peace movement do? Did it engage in an agonized effort to revise its conviction that both powers are always "equally" at fault and mirrors of each other? Sad to say, it did not, and here was where its political errors first became serious. Refusing to see the Russian actions for what they were, and eager to come through this experience with its position intact, the peace movement indulged in elaborate and sophisticated arguments to demonstrate that we ourselves hadn't "really" wanted the test ban (unquestionably many powerful forces in America didn't—but the government certainly did); that we were just as eager to resume testing as the Russians; that the scales of responsibility were, as usual, equal. Of course, the assignment of responsibility barely mattered much, except as a question of historical truth, and anyone would be willing to forgo the luxury of blaming if it meant that an effective beginning to disarmament and the taming of the weapons could result from such magnanimity. But as a matter of fact those other analysts, who argued that a softening in our posture would only encourage the Russians to push harder and thus make the world situation more dangerous, seemed closer to being right than the theorists of the unilateral initiative. I still think that many of the measures they have proposed—for example, reducing our nuclear stockpile and our enormous capacity for overkill—are good ones, but if they are to lead to an effective détente, they will have to be accompanied by other measures that demonstrate our determination to maintain the military status quo.

It is not likely that the administration or the people will forget the one clear victory we have enjoyed in many years in restricting the spread of nuclear weapons; nor will they forget the policies that led to this victory. The de-nuclearization of Cuba was not effected by a unilateral initiative, nor even by appeal to the good offices of the UN. It is nothing to cheer about that such grim and sober threats were required to get the missiles out of Cuba. But when one recalls the Russian reaction to our efforts to con-

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clude a test ban treaty in Geneva, one wonders whether any other course than the policy the government followed could have succeeded so well.

The peace movement will have to ponder this experience, as it did not ponder Russian intransigence at Geneva and the subsequent breaking of the moratorium on testing. I hope that the movement will emerge from its present confusion in a strengthened condition. For we still need a peace movement in this country, we need it now more than ever, to balance the much larger party of the wild men who have an insufficient respect for nuclear weapons, and an insufficient love of life, including their own.

NATHAN GLAZER, *a regular contributor and former editor of* COMMENTARY, *is now with the federal Housing and Home Finance Agency in Washington. Harvard University Press will issue his book dealing with the ethnic groups of New York City.*

* * *

MOSCOW'S JEWS

Chanan Ayalti

IT WAS LONG AFTER midnight when I returned to the hotel. The supervisor dozed behind her little table in the lobby of the 18th floor. She smiled slightly as she handed me my key. But when I started to unlock the door, the key would not turn and the door did not budge. My knees actually trembled. I thought: the GPU. NKVD.

I listened. No sound came from inside. I tried the lock again. Now the door opened and I turned on the light. What had it been? A bad conscience? I knew of no crime I had committed against the USSR. I had not indulged in any propaganda and I had not smuggled anything in. I had only brought with me a prayer shawl, skullcap, and Hebrew calendar which I gave away as a present to a Jewish friend in his late seventies who lived in Moscow. The old man's ancient *tallis* was torn and greasy. I was afraid its fringes were no longer kosher.

One hears so many things when one prepares to go to Russia, things like that when you leave your room they come and look into your suitcase and examine every paper in your briefcase. I put signs on my suitcases and especially on my briefcase. They remained undisturbed. And soon I started to make notes about my impressions of the country and my conversations with people, cautiously first, on bits of paper in a private code, half Yiddish, half Hebrew, concealed in my breast pocket. Finally, when I stayed at the big Hotel Peking, I left my notes quite boldly on the desk.

The Volinskys

I did not know the Volinskys beforehand. Their relatives abroad had asked me to look them up, explaining that I would be able to talk freely to the husband, Misha, but that his wife, Lisa, would probably be reserved. She was a revolutionary of the old days, way back from the civil war, and still a party member.

They had a beautiful apartment by Moscow standards, three small rooms and a bathroom which they had built themselves. The kitchen they shared with a deaf old woman with two sons who were mostly absent, a thing to be thankful for. The drawback was that it was a basement apartment and always dark.

Misha Volinsky was a dental technician, a specialist. Once he had lived in an apartment in a new building which belonged to the combine where he worked. But in 1937, when the terror started, his brother, a party member of long standing, had been arrested. A month later Misha was dismissed from his factory, which supplied the army with artificial teeth. Misha was considered a security risk. He had then had to vacate his brand new apartment and exchange it for his present one.

Misha's brother and his brother's wife, who left behind a four-year-old daughter for Misha and Lisa to raise, were sent to Siberia to a slave labor camp, and released only twenty years later, during the amnesty after Stalin's death. They had had their civil rights restored and now they were living again in Moscow, on the small pension that all older Soviet citizens receive.

When I got to the Volinskys' house, Lisa wasn't there. She came several hours later. She was well dressed by Moscow standards, even with the kind of elegance that reminds you of Sholem Aleichem's proverb: "She can produce noodles out of nothing." She knew very little Yiddish, so we talked in

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Russian, and partly in English, which she had recently learned from a television program.

We met several times. Soon I could imagine her as she had been in the course of the years. A passionate young girl from a well-to-do Jewish family in White Russia, she joined the Red Partisans after the October Revolution and in the civil war she served as an army nurse. Then she went to Moscow, to study and to build socialism—which she had believed would solve all problems, including the Jewish question and love.

She had been a party member full of enthusiasm and faith. Then the country fell into the era of terror, and more and more innocent people were arrested. She told me that many of her friends were sent to Siberia, others were shot right in Moscow.

In the second year of the Second World War, her only son was killed. Her daughter was evacuated to Central Asia; she married there and did not return. After the war the terror kept on. Lisa was then working in a bacteriological institute. Her boss, a professor, did not know that she was Jewish. Once when he had to leave for a while, she was to substitute for him. He instructed her: "Of 'them'—only 5 per cent." . . .

"For years," she said when she recalled all this for me, "we slept with a packed suitcase by the bed . . . they might knock at the door in the middle of the night."

Lisa told me how on the day Stalin died, their adopted daughter (the child of Misha's brother, who had by then been sixteen years in Siberia) came home from high school with eyes red from crying. She fell into Lisa's arms, sobbing loudly: "Mommy, what shall we do now? . . . How shall we live?" Lisa also started to cry: "How shall we live without him?" A few days later Lisa talked with a friend, a higher party functionary, and he told her: "Well, one will live somehow without him . . . maybe even better." Only then did she wake up as from a nightmare.

She was amazed that I knew of Stalin's plan to deport all Soviet Jews to Siberia or Central Asia. "Yes, there were lists already made up. Our party, Lenin's party, and anti-Semitism! After October, we, all of us, were willing to do anything at all that was needed, go to the end of the world. . . . But they ruined everything."

I told them that I was going to visit the Yiddish Soviet writer Vergelis.

"You mean Bergelson," she corrected me. "Here we call him Bergelson."

"No, I mean Vergelis. Bergelson was shot by the GPU."

"You know—the Jewish writers who were shot," her husband explained to her.

She knew but did not know. In the early years after the revolution they weren't concerned with Jewish culture. But lately they had become interested. They went to the few Jewish recitals in Moscow and laughed till they cried at Sholem Aleichem. They read him in Russian translation: his stories about *numerus clausus* and other troubles of the Jews.

Lisa looked at my coat: "What is this?"

"A zipper," I said. I showed her how the long zipper made it possible to remove the lining and have a raincoat for spring. She was beside herself. She had seen little zippers but not such an invention. She bent over to me and whispered: "Blessed be the Americans! They produce things which make life easier."

It was two days after the first flight of man into space, and the whole world was excited. I said: "Well, but you have Gagarin."

"You can have Gagarin, I'll take the zipper," she said, even lower.

Her real dream was a pressure cooker. She and Misha were not very young any more, and she had heard somewhere that in a pressure cooker the cholesterol got separated from the food. "It is true that American housewives are in love with pressure cookers, but the story about the cholesterol is only a fairy tale," I explained to her. But she was conditioned *not* to believe "anti-American propaganda." "What do men know about pressure cookers, anyhow!" she brushed aside my heresy.

Before I left Moscow she helped me pack. When she saw my hanging bag which could be converted into a suitcase, she became enthusiastic again: "Blessed be the Americans! They produce things which make life easier."

She was tired, but she had kept her dream of a young revolutionary: to make life easier for people.

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Politics

Toward ten o'clock a crowd of youngsters stood waiting in front of the café-restaurant of the Hotel National, one of the few places open at night in Moscow. Closing time was eleven; the manager would not let the crowd in, but he recognized me as a tourist and bade me enter. He found a seat for me at a table where a man sat alone.

I offered my table companion an American cigarette. He at first refused, but finally proposed that we exchange, one of mine for one of his. We started a conversation. It turned out that he was on the staff of one of the *Pravdas.* (There is *Pravda,* a Communist League *Pravda,* a Leningrad *Pravda,* etc.) He told me that an uncle of his had recently returned from a visit to America. He had attended an international meeting of some kind there.

"How did he like America?"

"Some things he liked."

"What, for instance?"

"That there were so many cars. Everybody has a car and people are well dressed," he sighed. "As long as people in the West are better clothed than our own people, we will have no proof that our system works better than the capitalist."

"Why don't you produce more clothes?"

"Why? Perhaps it's a question of raw materials. In America you have a well-developed chemical industry, nylon, rayon, dacron. We are soon going to open some new textile combines and maybe then we'll produce enough clothes. A watch for us was once a dream. We opened several watch factories and now we are even exporting watches."

I remarked that other matters interested me more.

"What, for instance?"

The question of freedom and justice, I told him.

He lowered his voice when he answered. "Yes, we had hard years," he said, "but now the whole juridical procedure is being changed." He was a trained lawyer and went into technical details, concluding, "When we have more clothes we will have more freedom."

Soon we were discussing the burning question of Cuba. He was thoughtful. Then, "Cuba, Laos, Congo, that's all peanuts," he brushed them aside with his hand. "There is only one problem: Germany; only one enemy: the Germans. With America alone we could come to terms, but West Germany prepares a new war and America provides them with arms."

I told him I was Jewish, but felt Germany could be no threat. "Half a Germany is too small to be able to make a war."

"You talk logically, but for *them* logic doesn't count." He argued that the Germans had only one thing in mind, war and revenge. "America sends them arms. Here is where the danger to peace lies." He bent over toward me and whispered: "There are many Jews in America, right?"

"About five million."

"Why don't you do something against the armament of Germany?"

A few days before, I had met some German Communists in Leningrad. They were with a tour from East Germany—three hundred persons in a special train. They told me that their train had been received with a band in Kiev.

"Well, and the East Germans?" I asked the young man from *Pravda.*

He hesitated, then said: "A German is always a German." He seemed to me to be reflecting the opinion and feelings of those in high places.

The Synagogue

A Moscow Jew took me on foot to the Central Synagogue on Sabbath eve. He also lent me a hat, straight out of a fairy tale, of reddish cloth, with ear flaps tied over the crown and a huge visor. I lost the look of an American tourist; I was transformed, by magic, into an old-fashioned coachman from the Bialystok Kahanaikas district or the Grodno fish market.

We came into a street which I saw to my amazement was named for the Ukrainian national hero Bogdan Chmielnicki, the pogromist of tens of thousands of Jews. Right off this street, in a sloping lane, stood Moscow's one big synagogue, a tall building with a columned entrance. We entered a wide anteroom. One of the doors led to a small prayer room, and the other to the main synagogue, which can hold hundreds of worshippers. Through a third door, on the side, several young men with incipient beards went in and out—it must have been the yeshiva. A sign on the wall

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of the anteroom announced in Yiddish: "No loitering or conversation in the anteroom during the reading of the Torah. The Administration."

It was still early, and there were only a few people in the main synagogue, mostly older men. A tall sexton stood at a table near the entrance to the small prayer room. People came in to check death anniversaries. Some of them were middle-aged and even young men in working clothes. The sexton looked up the anniversary cards in an index file.

I started a conversation with one of the men. He had sad eyes and a sealskin collar on his old coat.

"Is it already after *mincha*?" I asked him.

"Are you a stranger here?"

"I am."

"Where from?"

"New York."

He stared dubiously at my coachman's cap. Then he glanced down at my suit and shoes, and a smile appeared on his lips:

"Do you mean to say that you come from America?"

"Yes."

"Sholem Aleichem!" he greeted me. "And how are Jews doing in America?"

"Not so badly, thank God."

"Look at that!" he mumbled to himself. "I never expected to meet a Jew from America today."

One word led to another, and the conversation turned to local synagogue problems and conflicts among the members.

"Conflicts? What kinds of conflicts?"

"When there are two parties, there are conflicts."

"Why are there two parties?"

"Why? . . . Each wants to have the say in the Administration to decide who is to be the chairman and who to manage the pledges and contributions. But what do you say, are there synagogues in New York?"

"Plenty."

"And kosher stores? . . . How do you like that, who ever thought I'd meet an American Jew today? . . . Can you buy kosher meat in New York?"

"Plain kosher, and strictly kosher, all kinds. As much as your heart desires."

"Did you come to Moscow to visit relatives?"

"No, a tourist."

"Really? Just like that? . . . So you're a Jew from New York. . . . Who would have thought? . . ." He could not stop wondering at it.

Worshippers began to arrive. Men rocked back and forth in the corners, catching up with their prayers.

"Tell me," I asked the Jew with the sad eyes and sealskin collar, "do they pronounce a blessing here every Sabbath? For the Politburo and the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist party, like in the old days for the Czar?"

"No, such a *mi-sheberach* hasn't been said since the revolution. . . But we have a prayer for peace. Come over here and read it!" he said with pride, leading me to the front of the synagogue, to the eastern wall. "Our old Rabbi, may he rest in peace, composed it."

On either side of the Ark hung a long sheet of paper setting forth a prayer in Hebrew with an admixture of Aramaic. I was strongly tempted to copy it, but of course it was Friday evening after the candle service, and right in front of the Ark. I read the prayer several times, to commit it to memory. It ran approximately as follows:

Our Lord on high, who dwellest in heaven,
May Thy will be done,
Protect and cherish the government
of the USSR,
The lover of peace and the defender
of peace.
Shield, help, strengthen and give courage
To all the groups and individuals
all over the world
Who seek peace and defend peace,
For the sake of Aaron the Holy Priest,
Who was a lover of peace and a
seeker after peace.

"Do you have any children?" I asked the old man.

"Yes, two daughters."

"Married?"

"Not yet. . . . The Almighty didn't provide. . ." he said and his eyes filled with anxiety.

I told him that I had just come from Israel. He brightened and showered me with questions:

"How are Jews doing in Israel? What does Tel Aviv look like? Is it a beautiful city? Are there nice buildings there? And

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the apartments, what are they like? And people really speak the Holy Tongue there?"

I answered all his questions.

"And everybody eats kosher?"

"Some eat kosher, and some don't. . . ."

"Some don't? In the Holy Land?"

At that moment someone on the *bima* tapped the table loudly and a quavering voice came from the pulpit, in front:

"O come, let us exult before the Lord. . . ."

"Will you come tomorrow?" the Jew with the sealskin collar asked me. He had sat down on a bench and was leafing through a *Siddur*.

"I don't know, if I have time," I said.

"You're leaving already?"

"No, I'll step into the prayer room first, I have to meet someone there."

"O sing unto the Lord a new song. . ." the reader intoned from the pulpit.

"Come in tomorrow!" my neighbor whispered, not to disturb the prayer. "The Consulate will probably be here."

"They come every Saturday?"

"Sometimes they come on Friday, but they aren't likely to be here today any more. When they come, they sit over there," he pointed to the east wall.

He didn't say it, but he meant of course the Israeli Consulate.

When I got out into the street, it was still light. Workmen were stretching a red flag across a neighboring building. Most of the surrounding buildings were already decorated. A group of Red Pioneers walked by with red flags in their hands.

"Is all this already in preparation for May Day?" I asked a middle-aged woman who had come out of the synagogue with me.

"No, it is in honor of Lenin's birthday, tomorrow," she said.

We walked together uphill along the Spasoglinichevsky Lane. The woman told me that a great-aunt of hers was ill and had asked that someone in the family go to synagogue to pray for her, and also to order a *mi-sheberach*, a special prayer to be said for her recovery. She looked at me.

"Are you a stranger? Where from?"

"America."

"Oh! . . ."

I began to question her about life in the Soviet Union, about her family, about Jews generally. She gazed at my coachman's cap and my American suit, and the combination evidently displeased her, for she replied reluctantly, out of the corner of her mouth. Before we had reached the Plevna monument, she suddenly lost patience:

"Our life is fine and happy! We live well! We lack for nothing! Goodbye to you, goodbye!" she cried out sharply, and crossed to the other side of the street.

Assimilation

He served me coffee and began to clear the table.

"You are a foreigner?"

"Yes."

He glanced at the newspaper on the table before me. It was the Paris Communist *L'Humanité*. I had picked it up in the hotel lobby.

"Are you French?" the waiter asked.

"No, I'm from America."

"Staying here long?"

"A couple of weeks."

"And then? Back home?"

"No, I'll go to Warsaw first."

"Warsaw? You probably want to see the Warsaw Ghetto. . . ?" he said, half-questioningly.

I looked at him. Was he an anti-Semite?

He threw a quick glance over the room. The nearby tables were unoccupied.

"The Germans killed two hundred thousand Jews in Warsaw," he said quietly.

I did not think he was a Jew. Was he trying to express his sympathy?

He stacked the empty plates on a tray and left. It was late afternoon and the last customers were leaving the restaurant. The waiter returned and together we added up the food coupons due for the meal. I wanted to leave him a tip, but he refused.

"I was in Poland during the war, with the army," he told me, "but I never saw Warsaw. The Poles are so proud of their capital. Were you ever there?"

"I was born in Poland, but I don't remember Warsaw too well. I am Jewish, and I left Poland when I was very young."

As I turned to go, he hesitated a moment, then blurted out:

"Are you in a hurry? . . . If you have time, we might take a walk together. I'll be off soon. I am also Jewish. I am a Soviet citizen, but a Jew by nationality. My name is Sasha."

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Tall and blond, he looked about thirty, but was probably nearer forty. We met near the hotel. At first, we strolled along the central streets. We passed the "House of Trade Unions," famous for its hall of white columns. Sasha pointed out the theaters in a square—the "Bolshoi," the "Maly."

Suddenly he asked: "What did they really say at that congress of yours which came in for so much criticism in our press?"

"What congress? Where?"

"It was in Paris, I think. They said that American Jews were not Zionists now. . . ." he reminded me.

"Oh!" I exclaimed. "You must mean the Zionist Congress. But the question is altogether different. Ben Gurion . . . do you know who Ben Gurion is?"

"I do," he nodded. "Would you like to come to a park? We have beautiful parks of culture in Moscow."

It was a long bus ride. The day was cool, and there were few people in the park. On the quiet pathway, we were alone. I explained to him the debates on the subject of Zionism, and Ben Gurion's view that the Zionist organizations should be dissolved if their members were not willing to go to Israel. Sasha was intensely interested.

"And why should all Jews emigrate to Israel?" he asked.

"He doesn't say that all Jews should emigrate to Israel; he only feels that if a man considers himself a Zionist, he should go to Israel to build the country."

"Do the American Jews contribute a lot of money for Israel?"

"Oh, yes. The first colony in Israel was established by Russian Jews, did you know? The first Halutzim were Jews from Russia."

He knew. He asked whether there were any Jews in the world today who wanted to emigrate to Israel. I explained to him that the bulk of the recent immigration came from the Oriental countries.

I said:

"The political atmosphere in the Soviet Union is becoming more free; perhaps in another twenty years Russian Jews will be able to go to Israel."

"In twenty years the Soviet Jews will no longer be Jews!" he replied, with a strange mixture of sadness and derision. Generally he spoke briefly, drily, almost coldly.

"You mean, they will be assimilated? They will disappear?"

"Yes. . . ."

"And how are things in this country? . . . I mean . . . in regard to the treatment of Jews . . ." I hesitated. "What about anti-Semitism? . . ."

"There is no official anti-Semitism today, not on the part of the government. But there is a great deal of hostility toward Jews among the people."

"What kind of hostility?"

"They don't like Jews."

"But not everybody?"

"No, but many."

"How many?" I persisted. "Would you say, 50 per cent?"

"More."

"Do you feel it?"

"Well, yes. . . . You see, the word *'Yevrey'* [Jew] itself is spoken in a certain tone . . . it's something between a taunt and an invective."

He thought for a while and added:

"When a Russian is caught stealing or swindling, people say that Ivan or Andrey is a thief; but when a Jew is a swindler, they immediately say, 'Ah—those Jews. . . .' "

"Stalin lighted the spark of anti-Semitism, and the spark flared up," Sasha continued, as though to himself.

"You should be more careful," I warned him. "It is true that I am an American Jew, but all kinds of Jews come from America too. A few days ago a 'people's delegation' came here from New York. . . ."

"Did I say anything against the Soviet Union? What do I have to fear?"

"Tell me, do Jews associate here only with other Jews, or with Russians too? I mean in their private lives," I asked.

"I have many Russian friends. We meet on our days off. My wife is Russian. Not Jewish."

"Is she also against the Jews?"

"Oh, no, no! Not she!"

"Do you have any children?"

"A little girl, nine years old."

"Is it true that a Jew's passport is marked *'Yevrey'*?"

"Yes. My passport states: 'Nationality—Jewish.' "

"And how about your daughter?"

"I registered her as a Russian. A child, why should she suffer? She says herself that

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she wants to be only Russian. At school, some children once called her *'Yevreyka!'* I told her, if anyone called her *'Yevreyka'* to answer, *'A ty fashist!*—and you are a fascist!' Oh, well, children play," he suddenly retreated, "they call each other all kinds of nicknames."

"Can only children of mixed marriages be registered as Russians?"

"We are free to register our children as we choose. I have friends, both of them Jewish, who registered their child as a Russian."

"Do you know Yiddish?"

"No."

"What language was spoken in your home?"

"Russian."

He told me that his father had been an assimilated Jew and an internationalist. (Sasha used the expression "internationalist" repeatedly in the course of our conversation.) The family lived in Rostov on the Don; because of his father's profession as a high school teacher, they had the right to live in the Russian heartland, outside the Pale of Jewish settlement. "My father always said there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles," Sasha added with a sigh. When the Second World War broke out, Sasha had gone into the army. After the war he married. Now he was working during the day and taking some college courses in the evening. Tuition was free, but he had to work to support his family.

"Have you read Sholem Aleichem? In Russian?" I asked.

"I have, but I don't like him."

"Why?"

"Because he ridicules the Jews. He mocks everything that is dear . . . to one's heart."

Sholem Aleichem is my favorite writer, but I did not try to explain to Sasha that he misunderstood. Sasha reminded me of an Israeli sabra: rigid, narrow, humorless, with little capacity for appreciating Sholem Aleichem. Besides, I thought of his situation, with its frustrating sense of helplessness—a situation in which a man could not do anything in his own defense, since all his interests were presumably defended by the state.

"And what of the Jewish youth? What do they think? How do they feel about themselves?"

"There are some who are proud of being Jews. But the majority are uncomfortable with their Jewishness, ill at ease: what is it? what for? who needs it?"

"Do you discuss these questions with your friends? Are they also interested in them?"

"Yes, we discuss them. Some are very interested; others won't even listen—they want to avoid the whole matter. My wife also gets angry when I bring these problems up in conversation with friends: 'You and your *Yevreysky vopros!*—always with your Jewish questions. . . ."

I felt sympathetic with the Russian young woman whom I did not know. Her husband was possessed by some dybbuk. . . . But I also sympathized with him, the tormented Sasha.

I urged him again to be more careful, even with American Jews. He stared at me naively: "But I haven't said anything against the Soviet state!"

"No, you haven't, but. . . ."

"I am a Jew, and everyone here is proud of his people. Isn't it so?"

He thought for a moment:

"Perhaps you are right, though," he said with a laugh. "I've never gotten it in the neck, maybe that's why I am so free with my tongue."

I told him that I had just come from Israel, and he wanted to know everything about life there. I told him that life in Israel was hard, that it was the life of pioneers, and that meant many great hardships.

"You've probably brought many souvenirs of Israel with you?" he asked.

I said no, I never bought souvenirs when I traveled. It was only later that I realized he had desired some small memento of Israel. I had a dozen postcards in my briefcase—pictures of kibbutzim and villages, of the Galilee and the Negev. I had left him nothing. By the time I realized it, it was too late to do anything. I never saw the waiter Sasha again.

CHANAN AYALTI'S *book* Without a Curtain *(in Yiddish), the complete record of his visit to the Soviet Union in the spring of 1962, will be published this month. Mr. Ayalti last appeared in* COMMENTARY *with the story "Daily Life in the Messianic Era," in May 1959.*

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F. SCOTT FITZGERALD: REVEILLE AT TAPS

Ellen Moers

THE GOLD IN F. Scott Fitzgerald lies in his short stories, and they should be mined. He wrote about one hundred and sixty of them, half of which have never been reprinted from the magazines in which they originally appeared.* In the atmosphere of tender regret engendered by Andrew Turnbull's graceful biographical tribute, much satisfaction has been voiced over our own ability to worship Fitzgerald when our distant ancestors of the 1940's ignored him. It might be sobering to reflect that we still do not know, and thus can hardly evaluate his work.

Fitzgerald looks very different when regarded primarily as a short story writer and secondarily as a novelist. He looks better, too. Nothing, I imagine, will unseat *The Great Gatsby,* in critical opinion and popular reception, as the finest thing Fitzgerald wrote. It is also by far the shortest of his novels and, in terms of the span of years covered in the life of its main character, more compressed than many of his stories. The big novels have always met with grumblings of dissatisfaction from Fitzgerald fans. *This Side of Paradise,* as everyone knows, was a true first novel—half literary pastiche, half jazz—covering the facts and fantasies of Fitzgerald's own life from birth through college. His second novel, *The Beautiful and Damned,* carried on the story, with somewhat more seriousness, to Fitzgerald's courtship of his wife and early married life in the United States. *Tender Is the Night,* which everyone would like to be Fitzgerald's major work, but which simply doesn't make the grade, carries on the autobiography through the Fitzgeralds' European years and Mrs. Fitzgerald's mental breakdown. Its worst parts are autobiography, its best are the romance of hero-worship at which Fitzgerald excelled. The same judgment holds for *The Last Tycoon,* his unfinished novel.

The Fitzgerald of the short stories, including *The Great Gatsby,* is one of the least egotistical of authors. When he draws himself as the protagonist of a novel, self-disgust, shame, guilt, in short the failure to make himself a hero, cast an embarrassing pall over the whole book. When he puts himself into a short story, he figures as the naive, the weak, the incompetent but utterly attractive and characteristically American innocent. The narrators of *Gatsby,* of "The Rich Boy," of "A Short Trip Home," of "The Last of the Belles," have the short end of the stick, but wave it with extraordinary grace. "At twenty-three," says one of them for all of them, "I was utterly unconvinced about anything, except that some people were strong and attractive and could do what they wanted, and others were caught and disgraced. I hoped I was one of the former." The statement poses one of the two great themes in Fitzgerald's work: power as an emanation of personality and, conversely, the pains and pleasures, above all the survival, of the weak. The other theme was Love, which Fitzgerald seemed to believe was something the powerful inspired and the weak felt.

However often Fitzgerald's biographers tell us the contrary, people will go on thinking, until all his stories are available, that Fitzgerald collapsed with the Market, went into an alcoholic fog during the 30's, and revived briefly only just before his death to tell us how it felt to Crack Up. In 1930 and 1931 Fitzgerald wrote eight stories for the *Saturday Evening Post,* most of which have never been reprinted, which establish him as the historian "of that brief period [as Malcolm Cowley wrote of "The Bridal Party"] when the spirit of the Wall Street boom still flourished in the midst of the crash." Although the working-class poor were never Fitzgerald's subject, the range of types he fixes for us in the early 30's is wide: the speculator and financier ("The Bridal Party" and "Babylon Revisited"), the hotel manager and cosmopolitan sponge ("The Hotel Child"), the drunk ("A New Leaf"), the barber who rises and falls on a

* *The Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald* (Scribners, 1951) contains 28 stories, admirably selected and introduced by Malcolm Cowley. Ten of these are also available in the paperback *Babylon Revisited and Other Stories* (Scribner Library). Fitzgerald and Scribners put together four partial, often arbitrary collections: *Flappers and Philosophers* (1920), *Tales of the Jazz Age* (1922), *All the Sad Young Men* (1926), and *Taps at Reveille* (1935). Most of the "new" material in Edmund Wilson's and Arthur Mizener's collections—*The Crack-up* (1945) and *Afternoon of an Author* (1958)—is non-fiction.

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customer's tip ("A Change of Class"), the unemployed businesswoman who eats in soup kitchens to keep her son in Princeton, and the employed businessman who hopes that no one will notice he alone still has some money—and take it away ("Between Three and Four").

In the parlance of the American literary world it is customary to say we sell a short story but publish a novel. Selling is a literary sin, and it follows that an author's lucrative work must be his worst. Now Fitzgerald liked to eat (and drink) and felt an odd compulsion to pay his bills in full (eventually); what is more, he fell in love with a poor girl. So that, instead of saving his manuscripts for the genteel, unremunerative applause of posterity, he sold them for cash. In fact he sold most of them to the *Saturday Evening Post* and similar journals that paid best. And it can be argued that Fitzgerald's best work, with the one exception of *The Great Gatsby*, appeared in the "slicks." The two dozen or so first-rate stories among those bought by the *Post*, *McCall's*, *Red Book*, *Liberty*, and so on easily contain more first-rate work than he put into any one of his long novels.

"I'll write you a fine obituary," Hemingway wrote once to cheer up his gloomy friend, ". . . and we can take your liver out and give it to the Princeton Museum, your heart to the Plaza Hotel, one lung to Max Perkins and the other to George Horace Lorimer." That, and another quotation from correspondence, provide the only occasions for either of Fitzgerald's biographers, Andrew Turnbull or Arthur Mizener, to name George Horace Lorimer, whose role in Fitzgerald's career is never discussed. Yet Lorimer in different circles is often called the greatest American magazine editor of all time, who built the *Post* from nothing in 1898 to something by 1936 (the extraordinary span of his editorial reign) and bought almost seventy pieces by Fitzgerald. On the other hand, little mention is given to Fitzgerald in the official Lorimer biography beyond his role as the high-brow in the possibly apocryphal story of a Philadelphia lunch with Lorimer and his minions. On that occasion Fitzgerald is supposed to have denounced the American magazines for always having "taken no notice of real genius. It's a safe bet that nobody in this room ever heard of the most important American writer of the early 1900's. It may be fifty years before anybody, except a few of us, even knows that Frank Norris ever existed!" This outburst is said to have halted conversation, until Lorimer broke the tense silence with a laugh and this reply: "Then maybe I didn't go so far wrong after all when I bought *The Pit* and *The Octopus* from Frank Norris and serialized them both in the *Post*."

THE ONE magazine editor who became a friend and confidant of Fitzgerald was Arnold Gingrich of *Esquire*, which from 1934 to 1940 came to be Fitzgerald's most important and at the end his only market. At Gingrich's urging, Fitzgerald wrote for *Esquire* the most harrowing prose of his last years: the title pieces and much of the contents of both *The Crack-Up* and *Afternoon of an Author*, along with some beautiful stories about sponges ("Financing Finnegan") and drunks ("The Lost Decade"). He also wrote for *Esquire* some of his funniest prose. In this category fall the stories about Pat Hobby, written in 1939 and 1940 and now for the first time published as a whole in hard covers, with an introduction by Mr. Gingrich.*

Of the seventeen stories in this volume, none comes up to the highest standard of Fitzgerald's short fiction; still about six are very good, another six are very good for half the way, and, of the rest, none is so bad that it deserved to be buried forever, or even for twenty years, in the files of a magazine. All the stories were written with gusto as "entertainments" (as Graham Greene used to say), to make money (not much money), and to keep the writer's hand in. Those who know Fitzgerald only as a novelist will find these stories astonishingly at odds with their image of the author; those who know Fitzgerald's short stories will recognize his uncanny ability to use his own reactions and sympathies in fiction without losing himself. For Pat Hobby, the forty-nine-year-old deadbeat, alcoholic, unemployed Hollywood scriptwriter, is not F. Scott Fitzgerald. On the other hand, if Fitzgerald had not known exactly how it felt to be a drunk and a fail-

* *The Pat Hobby Stories*, Scribners, 159 pp., $3.50.

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ure, a sponge and a rat, an ignoramus, an old man and a has-been, the Pat Hobby story could never have been written as farce. There is no bitterness and no self-pity in this volume. Fitzgerald went out as the humorist of the bum—just as he began his career as the romantic eulogist of Love (though all the women in his early fiction are, when you come to think of it, vicious, destructive, selfish, whining bitches).

What should give these stories a long life, trivial as they sometimes are, is their brilliantly indirect account of the rise and fall of Hollywood. Fitzgerald may have paid little attention to the great cosmopolitan experiments in the arts that fascinated and influenced his fellow American expatriates during their years in France, but he did not miss the movies. In his way he was the chronicler of the Movie Age, with its brilliance and stupidity, its splashing generosity and its petty cruelties, its creation of art and its waste of talent, its laughable artificiality and its emotional power. The impossibly gorgeous décor of "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz" (1922) springs from the imagination of "a moving picture fella"; after an architect, a decadent poet, and a stage designer had gone mad over the assignment, "he was the only man we found who was used to playing with an unlimited amount of money, though he did tuck his napkin in his collar and couldn't read or write." The nemesis of *The Beautiful and Damned* (1922) is Joseph Bloeckman, the sinister Jew who, in the course of his rise from immigrant peanut vendor to movie magnate ("as always, infinitesimally improved, of subtler intonation, of more convincing ease") dazzles the beautiful Gloria with the temptation of becoming a star. Something of the childish spirit of Gatsby's parties (1925) is imported from Hollywood, along with some of the guests. Fitzgerald wrote two good stories about Hollywood people after his first working trip there (in 1927) and one excellent story, "Crazy Sunday," after his second trip (in 1931). The stunning opening section of *Tender Is the Night* (1934) deals with the reactions of a young Hollywood star. And, of course, *The Last Tycoon*—Fitzgerald's unfinished, perhaps most ambitious novel—was written in, about, and for Hollywood, where he lived most of his last three years. All of which brings us back again to the Pat Hobby stories.

Fitzgerald had no illusions about the role of the writer in the making of a movie. Even in Pat Hobby's salad days, when good salaries, wives, and a pool were his reward for writing scripts, "he had never written much, nor even read all the 'originals' he worked from, because it made his head bang to read much. But in the good old silent days you got somebody's plot and a smart secretary and gulped benzedrine 'structure' at her six or eight hours every week. The director took care of the gags." The real heroes of the Hollywood world, and certainly the heroes of Fitzgerald's last years, are the producers and directors, those who sit at the Big Table in the studio commissary and, according to Pat Hobby, "could have Ronald Coleman pressing pants." Secretaries and script girls and call boys are invaluable associates, kept in their useful place by harsh treatment and poor pay. Writers are unstable, mercenary transients whose usefulness to the producers is ordinarily outweighed by the nuisance of having them around. (Mr. Banizon "wished that writers could be dispensed with altogether. If only ideas could be plucked from the inexpensive air!") And stars, like costumed extras, are nonentities; they are for the public.

Pat Hobby accepts this hierarchy unquestioningly, for, though a has-been ("his inflamed and burnt over talent had failed to produce a second growth"), he is nothing if not an insider. The "industry" is in his blood along with the alcohol; and his dialogue, his gestures, the plot of his existence are made of celluloid. Fitzgerald did a witty job of blending movie with fiction: at his funniest, Pat Hobby is himself a silent movie comic, the insiders' Chaplin who knows how to sleep in a bed on a set, eat a prop-food lobster, and wear a costume overcoat:

> As he passed through the side entrance an unfamiliar studio policeman stood in his way.
>
> "Everybody in the front entrance now."
>
> "I'm Hobby, the writer," Pat said.
>
> The Cossack was unimpressed.
>
> "Got your card?"
>
> "I'm between pictures. But I've got an engagement with Jack Berners."
>
> "Front gate."

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> As he turned away Pat thought savagely: "Lousy Keystone Cop!" In his mind he shot it out with him. Plunk! the stomach. Plunk! plunk! plunk!

In "A Man in the Way" Pat steals an idea from a good writer who is also a pretty girl; during the course of the story she comes in and out of focus (in Pat Hobby's blurry alcoholic vision) as girl, secretary, writer, plot idea, star, plot idea, writer, secretary, and, at last, girl again. It is all rather stumbling farce; but it is saved, as the best Pat Hobby stories are saved, by Fitzgerald's parody of a real world consecrated to creating unreal worlds, in which all the real people take on the unreality of their own creations. Story ideas, snatches of dialogue, "benzedrine 'structure,'" sets, camera movements, and finished scenes are the stuff of these stories—and every variety of Hollywood product is represented. Pat works on, thinks about, and acts out crime pictures and Westerns, ballet and medical pictures, romantic comedies, First World War and Civil War pictures, even Bengal Lancer pictures.

> Why not? He knew how to write that stuff:
>
> *Beautiful Long Shot.* The Gorge. Show Tribesman firing from behind rocks.
>
> *Medium Shot.* Tribesman hit by bullet making nose dive over high rock. (use stunt man)
>
> *Medium Long Shot. The Valley.* British troops wheeling out cannon.

"They don't want authors. They want writers—like me," says Pat Hobby. The statement—which closes a story and is good rueful comedy in context—is more admiring than bitter. "They," the heroes of Fitzgerald's Hollywood, seem to know what they are doing. Out of the cheap ideas and factitious devices comes a genuine art that has, from time to time, according to Fitzgerald, a power to move beyond the writer's reach. "Two Old Timers," one of the saddest and best of the stories, turns on the recollection of a silent film about war in the trenches: the director had used trickery and violence to elicit the proper emotions from the handsome, wooden-faced star; the story of the *making* of the scene is nothing but slapstick to Pat Hobby and humiliation to the star. But the scene itself, as recollected by the public (in the person of a Hollywood cop) has nonetheless evoked the realities of war.

Fitzgerald's study of the giants of Hollywood is the last, in fact the happiest, manifestation of his lifelong concern with the makers and doers, the undeniably strong. It is an extension of the wistful, intensely felt adoration of the boy for the supreme athlete: for the youngster in the Basil stories who performs ridiculous, yet impressive acrobatic feats; for the football hero of Fitzgerald's college days; for the high-diving Dick Diver in *Tender Is the Night.* Maturity brought a somewhat more realistic, but often more embarrassing, worship of doctors, not so much as healers and benefactors but as men of power and decision, men who know and who do what they know. Doctors, surgeons, interns, and psychiatrists crop up persistently in Fitzgerald's long and short fiction, usually to bad effect—surely the very idea of Dick Diver as a brilliant, profoundly original psychiatrist is hard to swallow. Even in "Family in the Wind" (the story of what happens to a great doctor after he fails and retreats from the top of his profession—of a middle-aged Diver, in other words), Fitzgerald's emphasis is on the medical man's strength and decisiveness. "As the liquor spread over the doctor's insides he felt an instinct to do something, not to violate his prejudices but simply to make some gesture, to assert his own moribund but still struggling will to power." Further on the same doctor finally decides to save—by an extremely delicate brain operation—the life of a man he has every personal and moral reason to hate, and Fitzgerald lapses, in all sincerity, into the bathos of hero-worship. "Something purely professional that had nothing to do with human sensibilities had been set in motion inside him, and he was powerless to head it off." What a dazzlingly attractive idea this must have been for Fitzgerald himself: that a man's work—his knowledge, his skill, his drive to act—should override those "human sensibilities."

Few writers appear in Fitzgerald's short fiction, and those who do hardly possess the power and wisdom of his medical men. Fitzgerald thought of writing talent much as Charlie in "Babylon Revisited" describes his career as a speculator: "I've learned. I worked hard for ten years, you know—until

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I got lucky in the market, like so many people. Terribly lucky. It won't happen again." Writers, bond salesmen, brokers, lawyers, advertising men, interior decorators, junior business executives are, in Fitzgerald's fiction, harmless but also useless, weak and idle, frivolous, parasitical, and at the mercy of their luck—whether the luck is their talent, their family connections, or the fluctuations of the market.

It is curious that Fitzgerald has kept for so long the reputation for being in love with the idle rich, when he demonstrated repeatedly his Midwestern, middle-class reverence for "honest" work. "The Rich Boy," the story from which Hemingway quoted derisively the line about the very rich as "different from you and me," sets out to describe the life of a young man born into a solid old New York family with millions, but soon turns into the account of an extraordinarily hard-working Wall Street man, who achieves a partnership and a handsome income through his own exertions—and not in the family firm. Of all Fitzgerald's fiction, "The Rich Boy" demonstrates best how little he knew, or cared to learn about, the established rich of the Eastern seaboard. Fitzgerald was certainly in love with the idea of being rich himself, but he never thought up any way to get there other than hard work.

He admired engineers and architects, but obviously didn't know enough to write about them at length. The love-sick hero of "The 'Sensible Thing' " abandons his engineering career for a safe job as an insurance clerk because he wants to marry at once, but the dream persists: "to change the sweep of rivers and the shape of mountains so that life could flourish in the old bad lands of the world where it had never taken root before" —and so on. Much more effective, indeed powerfully moving, is Fitzgerald's old architect in "The Lost Decade." But there is always something wistful in Fitzgerald's descriptions of the makers and doers, whether builders or psychiatrists—as if he is saying, as his young heroes are always saying, not for me.

The discovery of the Hollywood producer-director was a bonanza for Fitzgerald's last years—for his emotional life, I imagine, as well as for his writing. The portrait of Monroe Stahr that was beginning to take shape in *The Last Tycoon* shows Fitzgerald's joy at recognizing, in a field of which he had firsthand knowledge, the man of action. Stahr is at his best, at his most romantic, in the very good scenes where he takes command of the hectic and disorganized movie-making apparatus. Stahr's fantastic industry, his complete devotion to the job, his quick decisiveness, his ability to rule and to inspire blind loyalty in others, his courage, his strength, his grasp of the whole (in which writers, actors, cameramen are merely divisive parts) are blended with a tired detachment and a gentle, selfless benevolence. All together these qualities constitute Fitzgerald's idea of heroism, "the idea," he once wrote, "that it is pleasantest to live with."

Stahr, it should be remembered, is a little Jew without polish or education, who trained to manhood—and to heroism—in the slum battles of the Lower East Side. He is Fitzgerald's apology for *What Makes Sammy Run*—for he is the same Sammy, seen by someone else. He is Gatsby matured and purified. He is Joseph Bloeckman justified. He is the Jack Berners, the Harry Gooddorf, the Max Leam, the Carl Le Vigne (what was your name before. . . ?), the Louie Griebel, even the aged, obese, Yiddish-speaking Harold Marcus, all of whom rule over Pat Hobby's Hollywood with the omniscience, the power, and the benevolence of deities. He is also the "Joe" to whom Fitzgerald wistfully appealed, at the end of an indignant letter to Mankiewicz, protesting changes in a script Fitzgerald had written with devoted care: "Oh, Joe, can't producers ever be wrong? I'm a good writer—honest. I thought you were going to play fair."

And it is in the bounce and verve of the Pat Hobby stories that Fitzgerald wrote down his final, cheerful acceptance of the sentence pronounced upon him by his heroes and his gods:

". . . somebody should have cracked down on *you*, Pat. But you were an amusing guy in those days, and besides we were all too busy."

ELLEN MOERS *is the author of* The Dandy, *a study of 19th-century literature and society, and is currently writing a book on Theodore Dreiser. Miss Moers's last contribution was a review of* Sinclair Lewis (*May*).

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Automated Feast

To the Editor of Commentary:

Mr. Seligman's interesting article on automation ["Man, Work & the Automated Feast," July] was marred by several paragraphs which tried to explain digital and analog computers. Rather than correcting the many misstatements and inaccuracies of those paragraphs, I would like to present the following explanations:

Certain electronic assemblies can be interconnected to produce voltage variations which are *analogous* to the velocity, acceleration, and displacement of other physical systems. Thus, by measuring the voltage variations of the "analog computer" it is possible to obtain solutions of problems ranging from missile trajectories to the flow of fluid through a pipe line. The analog computer is quite useful for problems involving rate of change, but has certain inherent accuracy limitations.

The "digital computer," on the other hand, uses the electronic pulses to represent numbers (digits). The pulses can be manipulated so that addition, multiplication, and other arithmetic operations can be performed. The results of the operations and instructions for performing further calculations can be stored in the computer "memory," usually by magnetic means. The digital computer can alter its procedures based on the results of calculations, e.g., if the result of a calculation is positive the computer might perform one set of instructions, while if the result is negative, the computer might perform another set of instructions. Because of this "decision-making" ability, the digital computer is quite useful in the field of automation. . . .

Oscar Firschein

Menlo Park, California

To the Editor of Commentary:

. . . A prime source of confusion in Mr. Seligman's article is its failure to distinguish between different classes of machinery. A computer, for example, is a machine which processes information; whereas a machine which automatically controls power through the use of feedback is called a servomechanism. Power and information are two entirely different physical measures. . . .

As far as the machine-tool industry is concerned, it is not true at all that it has been "impelled willy-nilly" to adopt numerical control. . . . Numerical control is useful for machining surfaces which are defined by complex mathematical formulae, or have other characteristics which are not within the ordinary capabilities of a machinist. . . .

Another set of distortions in Mr. Seligman's article concerns the possible applications of digital computers. Computers cannot write television scripts or compose music within any intelligent meanings of the words "writing" and "composing." A computer can do these things in the same way that monkeys let loose in a roomful of typewriters can write Shakespeare's plays. . . .

Roy G. Saltman

Flushing, New York

To the Editor of Commentary:

. . . Mr. Seligman cites four basic aspects of current trends in automation: uniform material flow, uniform standards of output, automatic control, and new energy sources. Instances of the first three of these trends can be cited in many industries. To say, however, that "a wide range of goods is now produced in this startling manner" is gross exaggeration. Transfer lines, such as the engine block line, are widely used in auto engine production. Yet the "530 precision operations" in machining the engine block are a small part of the story; the plant that houses the "startling" transfer line also employs 4,000 men, most doing simple manual tasks to make the castings, to supervise and maintain the machining lines, and to assemble and test the engines. Thousands more are employed to assemble the car of which the engine is only a part. . . .

Computers, of course, are new and different, and they seem to give Mr. Seligman especial difficulty. Herbert Simon's projection that by 1985 machines will be able to perform all middle management functions is, again, only part of a "fact." Simon, unlike Seligman, does not project mass displacement of middle managers. What is feasible is not always economically desirable, and

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Simon's prediction of changes in the future occupational profile are conservative indeed, and worth quoting along with his more "nightmarish" prediction of capabilities. Furthermore, not content to wait until 1985, Seligman speaks now of "automated companies" (a concept no doubt related to that other mythical creature, the "automated plant"). Can he name an "automated company"? Who are the "many middle management people in automated companies" dreading the axe? Which "bright young men" are leaving for "nonautomated" firms?

RICHARD. S. ROSENBLOOM
Assistant Professor
Graduate School of Business Administration
Harvard University
Boston, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I am sure that Mr. Seligman knew, even as he wrote his article on automation, that unkind things would be said by many in the labor movement and out. I find it curious that so many people who rejected what was once referred to contemptuously as the "trickle down" theory have managed to support what are essentially more sophisticated rationales for the same thing.

In any case, let me raise a lone voice of support and admiration. As a matter of fact, I fully intend to use either the article or sections of it in some of our Extension work.

One thing though—Seligman criticizes both Lewis and Bridges. Without in the least disagreeing on the desirability of pressure for a shorter work week, was this a realistic alternative at the time and under the circumstances in these two cases?

ERIC POLISAR
New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations
Cornell University
Ithaca, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . The horrors of technological unemployment have been adequately portrayed by many authors. Often, the real villain is not automation. Foreign competition or alternative sources of supply must be reckoned with today in many industries. . . . Actually, our vaunted American standard of living is a product of automation. We are able to export goods like coal and electric motors only because of our production efficiency. . . .

The transient problems of automation and technological change, while serious, can often be cured by specific measures: two unions can merge, an industry may be subsidized, an apprenticeship program can retrain workers, etc. There is another group of problems which is more serious. . . .

Spreading the work through shorter hours appears to be a wonderful way to keep everyone employed and yet not drown in a flood of consumer goods. Unfortunately, man-hours of work are not completely interchangeable. There is a need for higher levels of skill in the automated economy. Maybe the semi-skilled worker can tend a machine, but the unskilled worker—inadvertently destroying equipment—could be worse than useless.

This is a definite long-range problem of automation. We don't know the limits of education, but some fraction of the population probably will never fit into automated society at all. . . . The protected portion of society is likely to increase. At the same time, there will be a growing shortage of those capable of designing, building, using, and repairing the automatic equipment. There will also be a shortage of competent teachers, administrators, medical personnel, and other technical specialties. Will these people get a shorter work week, too? . . .

ERNEST B. COHEN
Upper Darby, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . I was fascinated by Mr. Seligman's development of the subject [of automation] and feel that he made an excellent case for the reduction of the work week as a partial solution to the growing problem of technological unemployment. Certainly with a higher degree of automation and with the population explosion, we will be confronted with persistent problems of creating jobs.

EDWIN H. SPENGLER
Director
School of General Studies
Brooklyn College
Brooklyn, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Mr. Seligman is not much more convincing on automation than he is on computers. Everything is automation to him, from the automatic production of machine tools, through data-processing and inventory control, to the automatic shovel which strips 200 tons of material. . . . Certainly these are very different phenomena, have very different effects, and require very different kinds of analysis. . . .

J. P. SHIPMAN
Waban, Massachusetts

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To the Editor of Commentary:

"Man, Work and the Automated Feast" is a stimulating discussion of the issues raised by automation. . . . I must, however, object to Mr. Seligman's cavalier dismissal of the Mechanization and Modernization Plan which our union, the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, has worked out with the Pacific Maritime Association . . . Seligman says that we adopted the "Lewis formula," which he characterizes as a "contemptible alliance between John L. Lewis and the operators." We concluded that more could be gained for our members by conceding the employer a free hand to put in new machines and new methods while at the same time, insofar as possible, providing security to the men for their jobs and their incomes. Under our agreement, there can be no lay-offs of the regular longshoremen. . . . There is a guarantee of earnings equivalent to 35 hours' pay at straight-time rates. There is an explicit prohibition against "individual speedup," enforceable through the grievance machinery, winding up, if necessary, in arbitration.

It is difficult, in view of this prohibition, to understand on what evidence Mr. Seligman can conclude that the changes in work rules permitted by the agreement "have intensified work loads on the docks virtually to the human breaking point." . . .

Lincoln Fairley
Research Director
ILWU
San Francisco, California

To the Editor of Commentary:

Mr. Seligman's essay on automation demonstrates how reactionary the trade union movement has become (if he represents, as I presume, their point of view). He emphasizes that automation has created "new industrial functions, new economic forms, new work habits and new social headaches". . . . but the solution he offers—spread the work—is not only older than Marx but completely discredited. . . .

If the unions were really interested in the worker (instead of in the number of their dues-paying members), they would take an inventory of the needs of the economy—not how many jobs are we losing but how many jobs do we need to fill. Vacancies have existed in the social professions for quite some time. . . . A meaningful retraining (and re-employment) program is the only answer to the problem.

Harry Tannenbaum
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Mr. Seligman *writes:*

The correspondents fall into three distinct classes: (1) engineers for whom the shock of recognition induces a state of grandiloquent nitpicking and a continuing refusal to face up to automation's social consequences; (2) young professors of business administration whose training in conventional wisdom has launched them into perpetual maunderings through the bogs of post-classical economics; and (3) serious persons who while disagreeing with some of my observations have indeed sought to grapple with the core of the problem.

Let me dispose first of the engineers: (One wrote to me privately, saying: "The social problems of automation *must* be solved! They *will* be solved!" Nice sloganeering, but how?) If Mr. Firschein prefers his technical description of analog and digital computers, that's quite all right with me. He has not, however, demonstrated that my comparisons with slide rules and adding machines are inaccurate. I don't think he can. Mr. Saltman, on the other hand, evidently doesn't believe that computers can be tied to control mechanisms. If so, then clearly *his* scientific education has been grossly neglected. Further, it is patent that he hasn't been reading the literature very carefully, for any number of experiments with computers have come up with usable TV scripts. Certainly, some of the soap operas assaulting the home screens sound as though they had been ground out of the computer. And what is so farfetched about that? Wasn't it a man named Schillinger who used to compose music via mathematical equations? But while the engineers are arguing about when is a computer not a computer, they forget all about the ultimate consequences of the new technology—the creation of a vast economic and social underworld, a subculture of poverty enclosing a fourth of the population to which automation *per se* now contributes to the tune of 200,000 idle souls a year. Perhaps they feel about this as did a visiting English economist who told a group of West Coast academicians: "They're only Negroes, Puerto Ricans, and itinerant farmers."

Now, according to the professor of business administration, there is no such thing as Detroit automation, computers and feedback are mere science fiction, the Cleveland auto plant is a Potemkin village built by Henry Ford II, the unemployed in Detroit and Omaha and Pittsburgh displaced by machines are out of work because they're just plain lazy or uneducated, and the initials IBM stand for something like "intercon-

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tinental ballistic missile." Seriously, where has he been, lo these last ten years? Hasn't he seen any of the new installations in industry, let alone all the data-processing equipment in offices, banks, and retail stores? Has he ever talked with a worker displaced by a machine? Is he so unaware of the research efforts of the computer manufacturers that he believes bookkeepers to be a surviving breed? Ah yes, the professor teaches middle managers. The poor professor soon won't have anyone to teach.

The dilemma we face at the moment is properly posed by Mr. Cohen and Professor Polisar. But a solution which cuts off from society thousands of men only exacerbates matters. I consider the Lewis-Bridges response despicable because of its undercurrent of desperate cynicism. Mr. Fairley's understandable defense of the ILWU contract does not tell us what happened to the "B" men and the casuals on the docks. These workers—several thousand of them—are not "fully registered" and therefore unable to enjoy the handsome benefits won by Bridges for his "regular" longshoremen. This may seem a great victory for the ILWU, but it sounds somewhat hollow. I should think that the sort of approach employed by the Machinists' and Packinghouse Workers' Unions in bargaining on technological change makes more sense: at least the latter were concerned with *all* their members, not solely the elite. And they are exploring such avenues as retraining and relocation. As to the evidence on work loads, I choose to take the word of Harvey Swados, who was there.

To return to Mr. Cohen for a moment: his otherwise interesting remarks are marred by an irrelevant reference to the shorter work week. Does he suggest that displaced workers can be upgraded to become teachers and technicians? Obviously, this is silly: the prospect rather is for massive unemployment in the lower depths and shortages elsewhere. The latter may very well continue to afflict us simply because our society does not know how to secure what it needs.

An important lesson may be drawn from a debate such as this: the willingness to drift is as patent in technology as in politics and the cold war. Such is the nature of our time and such is its tragedy.

(A postscript: One error occurred in the article—I assigned Floyd Mann to Michigan State University. I'm sure the latter institution would be delighted to have him, but my good friend Floyd is at the University of Michigan.)

Rabbinical Responsa

To the Editor of Commentary:

Judah Sayer's observations on "Rabbinical Responsa in the USSR" [July] . . . omit the most pertinent recent example of living Jewish law under fire: the body of responsa which has come from the death camps of Nazi Europe. In contrast to the consistently lenient answers given by the Russian rabbis, these responsa seem to represent a more heroic as well as a more balanced approach. Recent examples are: *The Valley of Slaughter* (1961) by Rabbi S. Efrati and *From the Depths* (1959) by Rabbi E. Oshry.

Clarification is also needed in regard to Mr. Sayer's statement: "Captive women, after their release, were not permitted to their husbands since they might have been at the disposal, however much against their will, of other men." A captive woman violated against her will is only forbidden to her husband if he is a *Kohen*.

(Rabbi) Philip W. Zimmerman
Long Beach, New York

To the Editor of Commentary:

. . . Judah Sayer states . . . "Only if a Jew is ordered to renounce his faith and worship idols, must he yield up his life: Sanctification of the Name."

I was always under the impression that renunciation of the Jewish faith was only one of three offenses for which rather than commit, a Jew must submit to death—the other two being murder (direct or indirect) and incest. I was also taught that at the time of a government decree requiring Jews to abandon their faith, a Jew must even perform a *custom* at the risk of death, in order to prevent a deliberate detraction from his Jewish identity. At any other time, however, a Jew may save his life by transgressing any commandment but one of the aforementioned *three*. The Torah was given as a guide to *living*, but in certain cases Jews must yield up their lives and Sanctify the Name through martyrdom.

Judah Ash
Far Rockaway, New York

To the Editor of Commentary:

. . . Judah Sayer's article was much more than just a historical overview of the significance of the responsum in Jewish life in general and contemporary Russian Jewish experience in particular. It became an exciting and moving document mirroring the stiff-necked courage, perseverance, and resourcefulness of our Jewish brethren in their

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quiet but valiant struggle to . . . live, as the righteous, by and in their faith.

It was therefore doubly regrettable to find a number of unfortunate errors. . . .

(1) The Amora Samuel of the 3rd Century ought not to be listed as Rabbi. Despite his acknowledged brilliance and erudition in many disciplines, he never succeeded in receiving ordination. As the Talmud itself puts it (see Baba M'tzia 85b) "he shall be called Sage but never Rabbi."

(2) The ruling of the Chatam Sofer releasing his petitioners from paying the government tax, while perhaps "radical" and "insurrectionist," was not at all a reversal of Samuel's ancient Talmudic dictum "the law of the kingdom is the law." Mr. Sayer, in describing the circumstances, clearly indicates that the situation was one in which "the government . . . taxed inexorably and unequally." This factor makes all the difference. It is the identical point which is raised in just such a case by the Talmud itself (Baba Kama 113a). The conclusion is crystal clear. A Jew may not evade his tax obligations to his government, no matter how harsh they may be, provided they are imposed in a fixed, universal, and equitable manner. The imposition of taxes according to the . . . formulae of the ruthless and unscrupulous Roman provincial tax collectors of earlier days would be neither sanctioned nor encouraged by Jewish law. The Chatam Sofer was one of the modern giants of rabbinical learning. He could be relied upon for Halachic consistency.

(3) There are two distinct requirements with regard to a Jewish marriage ceremony. The first refers to the presence of witnesses. The Halacha prescribes that no marriage is valid unless it be performed in the presence of two designated witnesses (Gittin 2b). The second, however, concerns the presence of a *minyan*—ten representing the smallest unit of a Jewish community. Tradition stipulates (Kesuboth 8a, Megillah 23b) that a marriage ceremony as a public "matter of sanctification" shall be accompanied by a number of benedictions which may be recited only in the hearing of the community.

The responsa are concerned with the latter requirement in a time of emergency. The former, however, could not be waived.

Allow me to repeat that Judah Sayer has put us all in his debt. My only hope—and prayer—is that we shall extract from his report, regarding our brothers and sisters behind the Iron Curtain, a precious lesson

NORMAN E. FRIMER

Washington, D. C.

JUDD L. TELLER, a frequent contributor to COMMENTARY, is the real name of Judah Sayer. Mr. Teller wrote under a pseudonym because he was in the Soviet Union at the time his article was published.—ED.

Mr. Teller *writes:*

It is an author's privilege to chose his theme. As the title quoted in Rabbi Zimmerman's letter confirms I confined myself to Soviet responsa. If reason is needed, it is that I find these responsa particularly unique because they have endured forty-five years of Communist rule, and ideological challenge as well as persecution. I agree that the point about captive women should have been explicated.

I think that I can confidently reassure Judah Ash that no reader of COMMENTARY has been misled by me to treat incest and murder as permissible. I referred to only one of the three capital crimes because it is the only one relevant to Soviet circumstance.

I am grateful to Norman Frimer for his kind and generous comment and also for his elaboration on the Jewish marriage ceremony. As for the other two points: I used the term rabbi, as perhaps I should not have done, in the wider, less demanding—for some Jewish denominations—contemporary sense. It was not my intention to suggest that the Chatam Sofer digressed from Halacha. Like all law, it lends itself to a restrictive and a liberal interpretation. Chatam Sofer's ruling was a daring defiance of governmental authority and hence radical in the political sense. The Amora Samuel, conversely, author of the dictum, was criticized by contemporaries for believing that he served Jewry's interest best by being an apologist for the government.

Pigeon Feathers Fly

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Alfred Chester's review of John Updike's *Pigeon Feathers and Other Stories* ["Twitches and Embarrassments," July] deserves praise as a particularly sharp piece of criticism, which articulated the misgivings I have always felt about Updike's work.

On the other hand, it is old sport, and not really fair, to blame the *New Yorker* for the sad state of American letters. No one magazine, with or without a high rating, has been responsible for the general trend toward introspective pettiness; the *New Yorker* and other magazines function much more as reflections of American society (or more accurately a small part of it) than as shapers

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of it. In their day, Harold Ross and his cohorts, notably Wolcott Gibbs, used to worry endlessly that the *New Yorker* was becoming a haven for psychologically oriented writers, but they were powerless to stop the onslaught. . . . Today . . . if the only fiction coming in is of the Updike variety, there is not all that much that can be done to stop it. The occasional Salinger, also spawned by the *New Yorker*, should accordingly be that much more greatly appreciated.

THOMAS N. BETHELL

Beacon Press
Boston, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his review of John Updike's latest book, Alfred Chester is not being quite fair to the brilliant author of *Pigeon Feathers*. Ever since Chekhov, writers have been attempting to break the pattern and to fit the form of the short story to the subject matter. Now that the breaking away itself has resulted in a pattern, the gifted writer has a doubly hard task before him when he sets out to express his thoughts with originality.

In this, I think, Mr. Updike has succeeded without damaging his themes. Sometimes . . . the style is mannered, a little too artful. This is an idiosyncrasy which the pleased reader may take or leave at his own discretion. But to suggest that it is used to conceal emptiness or to please a particular literary market, is to ignore the writer's intention.

For a story that arrives triumphantly at its destination, I recommend "Should Wizard Hit Mommy?"—a 9-page masterpiece. . . . There are moments of shared insight in "Still Life," "Flight," and in the story whose unfortunate opening paragraph is the chief prop of Mr. Chester's case.

Perhaps, as a poet of sorts, I am inclined to overvalue style as such. Making allowances for this bias, I feel that the reviewer has let his own feelings run away with his judgment. . . .

ROSALIND LEVINE

New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I think Mr. Chester would not be flattered, but I would first like to say that I found his invective on *Pigeon Feathers* quite refreshing; I would call it . . . collegiate intellectualism; and having recently been graduated from college, I appreciate the vibrant asperity with which he attacked that portion . . . of Updike's stories which offended him—though he dismissed with it the real worth of the collection.

Very simply, I contend two things: one, that what Mr. Chester calls Updike's "craft" I call art (believing, with trite naivety, in "art for art's sake"). . . . Words are very beautiful entities; used imaginatively, they can yield experience in and for themselves, evoking images (and thus feelings) which express life, or aspects of it, in a new and different texture. This being, to me, the realm and object of poetry, I would call Updike's writing poetic. And there need be no other justification of the "clean, sad scent that seemed to lift from the checkerboard floor in squares of alternating intensity. . . ."

As for my second contention, I do not believe that tragic and/or ecstatic emotions must be evoked only by heroic characters acting in heroic situations; the small details of life are not, by their smallness, inherently petty. . . . They express the inner struggles of man to find a personal sort of happiness; they are neither incompatible with nor do they exclude the possibility of a greater moral responsibility. . . .

RUTH H. KATZ

Boston, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Mr. Chester seems more concerned with the *New Yorker* than with [Updike's] book. . . .

This is hardly the first time, nor the only publication, in which very snide remarks were made about the *New Yorker's* fiction. They seem mostly to represent a rather "holier than thou" attitude on the part of journals with rather less advertising. About the only short stories (written since 1900) I read are in the *New Yorker*, COMMENTARY, and sometimes, *Partisan Review*. To my taste, they are almost equally lacking in literary merit, and are very inconsequential. John Updike's are on the whole a lot better than average. He uses the language with respect. . . .

Mr. Chester should choose a different glass house from which to throw stones. His tasteless comments seem suspiciously flavored with sour grapes.

SUE RAICES

New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Mr. Alfred Chester dares *not* do obeisance to the *New Yorker* or its protégés? Amazing! And most welcome!

His review of John Updike's book is powerful, discerning, and touches on the sensitive spot, I think, of our current literary malady. It's almost enough to make one

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hope that American literature could again become strong and meaningful. His review should be required reading for all fiction editors of our so-called quality magazines.

(Mrs.) John Craig Stewart
Fairhope, Alabama

To the Editor of Commentary:

It is unfortunate that Commentary chose an Alfred Chester to review John Updike's "Pigeon Feathers." I am sure if they had any idea of the pain they were to inflict on him, they would have . . . reconsidered. My sympathy flows out to Mr. Chester, but more than that my gratefulness, for allowing himself to be exhibited as a primary example of those for whom John Updike does not write.

Updike . . . writes basically for those who not only empathize with him but need to know there are writers who produce a literature that still empathizes with them. They are people who were somehow blest with a supply of love that entered into the batter of ordinary childhood life and made the merely ordinary, real and eternal. . . .

Alfred Chester does not know what John Updike is saying and feeling. However, instead of merely saying that he feels no empathy (which he lacks the courage to admit) he viciously attacks him because the only way to deal with the strange and unempathic is somehow to destroy it before it destroys you. . . .

(Dr.) Melvin Rubenstein
St. Louis, Missouri

Mr. Chester *writes:*

If, as Mr. Bethell says in his interesting letter, the only fiction coming in at the *New Yorker* is of the Updike variety, it would seem more likely that this is because it is practically the only kind the *New Yorker* publishes and not because it is the only kind being written. But, this, of course, isn't the point. I wasn't, I think, "blaming" the *New Yorker* for the present state of affairs, although probably a case of blame could be made without too much ingenuity. I meant the magazine as symptom rather than virus.

Unlike Miss Levine and Miss Katz, with whose points of view I am in sympathy, I can't equate Updike's form of overwriting with poetry and style. The effectiveness of overwriting seems to me dependent on how much the writer feels. Lawrence's passion can carry a reader through unbelievable amounts of excess. With writers of lesser feeling, a single adjective can make the prose turgid.

May I wonder at Miss Raices allowing herself the liberty of identifying my attitude with Commentary while attempting to deprive me of the liberty of identifying Updike's with the *New Yorker*? As for sour grapes, I should like to point out, with respect to Miss Raices' respect for language, that "tasteless" comments cannot seem "suspiciously flavored" without also seeming suspiciously tasty.

Yes, Dr. Rubenstein, since you have caught me out, I will have to admit it. I was an unloved child and therefore cannot appreciate Updike. May I get off the couch now and try to stand up like a man?

A Jew's Dilemma

To the Editor of Commentary:

Loren Baritz faces his survival as an American Jew ["A Jew's American Dilemma," June] with a sense of guilt for those who stayed in Europe to die. He apparently regards this as a new problem, peculiarly American. Did not Johanaan ben Zakkai and his students go to Jabneh, leaving other Jews to die in Jerusalem? Did not the Jews of Babylon cling to their ancestors' exile and leave Jews to die with Akiba and Bar Kochba?

But, says Mr. Baritz, the "historical wandering Jew retreated because he had to; he did not leave his last place of exile to improve his social or economic position." Who drove Moses' followers from Egypt? What brought the Jew to ancient Alexandria? What kept him in Babylon when the way to Jerusalem was open at last?

Mr. Baritz will have it that dispersion was always affliction, but it has often been the means of survival. Let Mr. Baritz not forget that the "selection system" of the extermination camps was merely a system of priorities. It was not intended that any European Jew should survive. Had Nazi plans not collapsed in the fortunes of war, world Jewry might now exist only because there were Jews who had left Europe sometime, for some reason. Mr. Baritz asks, "Who died in my place?" Why does he not ask, "Who lived that Jewry and Judaism might survive?"

Well, Mr. Baritz tells us why he prefers the guiltier question. It is not because as an American he is safe and rich; it is because as an American he is not sure he can be a Jew. To be an American he feels he must forget; to be a Jew he must remember. But what must he remember? Is Jewishness only a memorial to the Jewish victim? Is it indeed all past and no future? Does participation

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in Jewish history demand insulation, or membership in Jewish community require aloofness? Does the Jew betray himself because exile has at last become home . . .?

If so, Mr. Baritz faces a dilemma, indeed. But it need not be so. There is a sense of newness about the American emancipation; there is a sense of home in this land. As an American Jew I can welcome the Jewish state of Israel without the slightest sense of being an expatriate. As an American Jew I can seek to live here in the long preserved humane and ethical tradition of my fathers; I can preserve my Jewishness without the retreat into aloofness and isolation. This is not a dilemma, but a challenge. Jewish learning and Jewish ideals have flourished in exile, both forced and voluntary, with and without emancipation. America does not make it impossible to be Jewish; it challenges us to be Jewish, proudly, freely, and by choice. It does not ask us to forget the centuries, but only to give up hiding in them. It does not ask us to abandon our traditions, but to make them a design for the future rather than a record of the past.

GEORGE HERMAN

Bowling Green, Ohio

MR. BARITZ *writes:*

I think that Mr. Herman's convictions must be applauded. But his world—including its lucidity, rationality, and comfort—is not my world, and yet I will not try to scold him for making sense or for articulating what perhaps most American Jews feel. One point only I wish he would manage differently, for the sake of the orderliness of his own position. He says that I "apparently" regard the problem of the American Jew "as a new problem, peculiarly American." Unequivocally, he implies that he disagrees. Yet he argues that "there is a sense of newness about the American emancipation; there is a sense of home in this land." I point out this contradiction not to criticize Mr. Herman, but rather to emphasize the unfaced dilemma of at least some American Jews, a dilemma which I think might be expressed, in the spirit of Mr. Herman's letter, something like this: "We American Jews are Jews, the same as Jews always have been; we participate in the ancient traditions and keep the old faith. But we are not the same because of this 'sense of newness.' " The tension of this position occasioned my article in the first place. I earnestly hope that Mr. Herman, and others, can resolve it to their own satisfaction; they cannot resolve it to mine, but then, happily, they don't have to.

A Question of Poverty

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In . . . his review of Norman Mailer's *Deaths for the Ladies* ["Art, Life & Violence," August], Dwight Macdonald refers to John K. Galbraith's *The Affluent Society* and to Michael Harrington's *The Other America*. He does a disservice to both. . . . He is especially slovenly when he writes that, on the basis of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics figures indicating that an annual family income of $4,000 a year marks the upper limits of poverty, "Mr. Harrington therefore concludes that between 40 and 50 million Americans now live in poverty, real poverty, the kind that one reads about in Gorky or Zola. . . ." But Mr. Harrington and Mr. Galbraith have both gone out of their way to point out that poverty can only be measured relatively, within a given historical time and place . . . and would completely reject such an idea. . . .

Mr. Macdonald is certainly right in suggesting that Galbraith's use of a $1,000 annual family income in defining poverty is grossly inadequate. . . . One of the chief merits of Mr. Harrington's book is the way in which he has shown that poverty is a much broader and more frightening thing than Galbraith suggested. But it is very clear that in almost every other sense Harrington's book owes Galbraith a heavy debt. . . .

Mr. Harrington's book is also brilliant and important because he sees that the pervasive misery and hopelessness of poverty in this country will continue unless there is swift and major Federal action. And he shows that there is a serious danger that poverty may soon become much worse unless something drastic is done. For this reason alone *The Other America* should receive far more than the sidelong attention that Macdonald has given it. . . .

ROBERT H. L. WHEELER

New York City

MR. MACDONALD *writes:*

If Mr. Wheeler wants a full-face look by me at Mr. Harrington's excellent book (also at three other current studies of American poverty), let him watch for a review-article by me in the *New Yorker* shortly. I'm puzzled by his charge of slovenliness; the facts are just as I stated: on page 3, Mr. Harrington estimates the number of under-$4,000 poor at possibly as high as 50,000,000 and he states on page 7: "Forty to fifty million people are becoming increasingly invisible."

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On Israeli Writers

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Robert Alter in his article ["Israeli Writers and Their Problems," July] presents some interesting comments, but a consideration of more writers, particularly the "in between generation," would have shed more light. . . .

Alter implies a dichotomy among Israeli novelists. He describes the older writers as quite incapable of capturing the new accent, rhythm, and nuance of feeling and thought characteristic of the contemporary scene. The new writers are labeled simply inept.

A real investigation of such authors as Shenhar, Burla, and Hazaz shows their great feeling for the peculiar and unique ethos of the land. They do talk of new accents and rhythms. We must realize that these are of no one group—no one ethos as yet. There are many particular groups, such as the Afro-Asian Jews, who have a considerable influence in Israel, being over 50 per cent of the population. They are playing a tremendous role in the rhythm, accent, and nuance of Israel and the above novelists of the "in between generation," which is not of Agnon (the older generation) or Shamir (the younger group), have captured this in a beautiful way. Furthermore, is Israel not in an "in between" state itself? . . .

Alter states that "when an older Hebrew writer sets his narrative in Israel, he succeeds by selecting an enclave of life in Israel which is not Israeli, and therefore is in some sense familiar ground to him." What is truly Israeli at this time? The army and kibbutz are not all that is Israel. Besides, Shenhar, Burla, and Hazaz write of the whole, not merely an enclave, and they succeed very well.

Alter says that when Ben Gurion sharply criticized certain Hebrew writers for their lack of social responsibility and indifference to the great national effort of the "ingathering of the exiles," or when Hazaz castigated younger writers for turning their backs on the richest of Jewish tradition, this does not induce good literature. But is it not the function of literature to display the depths of the reality of national consciousness? Must literature be nihilistic or cynical to be real?

Alter . . . implies that little of any significance in terms of Jewish culture is being produced. But Israel is the only place where Jewish fiction is really being written, fiction which is going to last in the millennia-old tradition of Hebrew letters. . . .

(RABBI) AMIEL WOHL

Waco, Texas

MR. ALTER *writes:*

I share much of Rabbi Wohl's excitement over modern Hebrew creativity, but I am afraid that his enthusiasm for Israel and its literature prevents him from looking squarely at all the facts.

There is, of course, an element of arbitrariness in dividing writers into generations. One could easily sift out a middle generation of Israeli novelists, but it would in no way constitute the magic missing link which Rabbi Wohl suggests. A primary fact about the Israeli literary situation is the gap between the older and younger groups, the so often discussed *be'ayat hadorot;* and the handful of undistinguished writers older than Yizhar and younger than Hazaz scarcely close this gap.

While more than half the Israeli population now is Afro-Asian in origin, the tenor of Israeli society—at least for the present—remains thoroughly Occidental. The characteristic experiences of Israel *are* the army, the kibbutz, the youth movement, the government bureaucracy. Moreover, writers like Hazaz, Burla, and Churgin turn to that segment of the Afro-Asians which is an exotic curiosity, not to the Westernizing younger generation which will help determine the nature of future Israeli society.

I certainly do not accept Rabbi Wohl's assumption that the function of literature is to display national consciousness, but, in any case, one can hardly make a programmatic appeal to writers for national consciousness, as Mr. Ben Gurion has done, and expect to get creative literature. I am astonished that Rabbi Wohl sees nihilism and cynicism as the only logical alternatives to an Israeli literature which is either simply propaganda or a kind of Zionist *Heimatkunst.* . . .

The natural setting of Israel understandably plays a significant part in the literature, though some romanticizing Hebrew critics tend to exaggerate its importance. . . .

In my article, while I tried to describe the struggles of the younger writers, I never called them "simply inept" and I indicated that their efforts were in many ways quite admirable. I made no judgments, by implication or otherwise, about the Jewishness of the culture Israel is creating. In any case, Rabbi Wohl seems to me to place more faith than the facts would warrant in the efficacy of the Hebrew language as a foolproof guarantee of Jewish authenticity. I wish he were right—it would solve a number of grave problems for contemporary Jewry, both in Israel and elsewhere.

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BOOKS IN REVIEW

THINGS OF THIS WORLD

AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHS. By WALKER EVANS. *Museum of Modern Art (distributed by Doubleday). 195 pp. $7.50.*

Reviewed by GEORGE P. ELLIOTT

THIS BOOK, a reissue of the original edition of 1938, contains 87 photographs taken in the years 1929 to 1937. They record faces, towns, streets, houses, interiors, fields, and signs, mostly in the South and in New York City, but also in New England, New York State, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey; two were taken in Havana, presumably made when Evans was in Cuba taking the photographs for Carleton Beals's *The Crime of Cuba* (1933). The locale of thirteen of the photographs is not given; two of these are of minstrel show posters of a kind which were by then pretty well localized in the South; eleven are American shards of the sort that could turn up anywhere in the country: "Main Street Faces, 1935"; "American Legionnaire, 1936." The volume also retains an unnecessary but harmless essay by Lincoln Kirstein on photography in general and Evans in particular.

Thirty-six of the *American Photographs* were taken in 1935–37 for the Farm Security Administration (or its predecessor). Three of these and one other were taken in 1936 when Evans was in the South with James Agee, collecting the material out of which they made *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941). The photographs in that book serve as stern reminders of the irreducible brute facts about which Agee's prose describes its impassioned, and sometimes purple, arabesques. Evans has not published another book. Since the war he has worked for *Fortune*, of which he has for the last several years been an associate editor, and he has published his photographs almost entirely in that magazine. On the evidence of these frequently good but always lesser photographs, especially some of old resort buildings ("Summer North of Boston," published in the issue of August 1949), it seems clear that the body of documentary photographs of American architecture which he has made but not yet gathered in a comprehensive volume is quite important.

Of the photographers employed by the FSA to document the plight of the farmers and farm laborers during the Depression, by far the most illustrious are Evans and Dorothea Lange. Both of them seemed to have been stimulated more by their FSA assignments to make excellent pictures in considerable number than by anything before or since; at least they owe both their most celebrated pictures to that stimulus and also their books. (Lange's 33 photographs in MacLeish's *Land of the Free* of 1938, out of a total of 88, and those in her own book, *An American Exodus* of 1939, were taken for the FSA.) Evans and Lange remain the two foremost American documentary photographers.

The nature of Evans's book can perhaps best be suggested by first "placing" documentary photography as distinguished from other sorts. The art of photography can be roughly divided into two categories, the compositional and the referential. Compositional photography depends for its effect upon the lines, shapes, and gradations of shade (and occasionally of color) on the paper in front of the viewer and very little or not at all upon the subject of the photograph. Two eminent artists of this sort are Edward Weston and Ansel Adams. Weston took a well-known picture of a nude which will illustrate the point. The viewer of the picture cares almost nothing for the actual woman who posed for the photograph, though her body and limbs are evidently smooth, full-fleshed, and well-proportioned. At first glance he is not even sure the subject is a woman, for her arms and legs are so involved among themselves and so contained within the single outline of the image

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—not an outline familiar in life—as to suggest nothing in ordinary experience. He does not see her face, for her head is bent towards the camera. She is not located; that is, there is no background. The composition that Weston arranged and then registered in two dimensions on his film has far less in common with any actual woman, including the model herself, than with certain other compositions which Weston arranged and photographed using for his subject a shell, a green pepper, or a bare toilet bowl seen prow-on from a vantage point just above floor level.

Referential photography, by far the more popular, is that sort which depends for its effect primarily (though never entirely) upon its fidelity to the visual impression which the subject might have made on the viewer if he had seen it plain. The forms on the page in front of him are intended to be recognizable and the image is supposed to be true to what was actually there. Portraits are of this sort, and the success of portrait photography is demonstrated by its having almost entirely supplanted portrait painting during the past century. What a good photographer can do as well as the greatest painter is to give the viewer an image which can allow him to imagine the actual person portrayed. Though this representational power is not the whole of any work of visual art, neither is it as unimportant as current theory and practice in painting suggest. It seems to me a Laputan state of affairs that nowadays referential photography can be scorned aesthetically *because* it is about actual life and that non-representational painting can be highly regarded *because* it is about nothing outside itself.

THE TERM "documentary" is commonly applied to that sort of referential photography which is intended to show ordinary people and their artifacts in their customary surroundings. An admirable example from *American Photographs* is "Child in Back Yard, 1932." We see a ragamuffin's head and the upper half of her body. She is standing against an old shed, of which we see two boards with a large gap between them. On the board to the left, just behind her, there happens to be a hinge, out of focus. On the board to the right there is, in focus, a child's crude sketch of a girl, suggesting a certain modishness of hair and dress, a Monkey Ward catalogue modishness. The actual little girl, freckled, hair disarrayed, dress ragged at sleeve and neck, is glancing slyly to her left, and from the expression on her wide, thin, stained lips one suspects that she is contemplating lively mischief. The photograph is as little about social injustice as is *Tom Sawyer,* but it would be called documentary partly because it is in a book of pictures of such intent but mostly because we are given, both in the title and in the picture itself, the sort of circumstantial details about the girl which comment on her sociologically, or, more accurately, which could be thought of as commenting on her sociologically. Moreover, in this picture Evans has been successful, as he nearly always is, in the special craft of referential photography, a craft never more important than in documentary work: he gives the illusion that this is what the viewer would have seen had he been there and looked for himself. Documentary photography, like realism in fiction, is a servant art: it aims to create in the viewer the naive illusion, "That's what things are really like." Just how illusory this naive impression is, every thick-thumbed amateur knows who has tried to take such photographs and every viewer knows who, after looking at a book such as this, goes around seeing some of the things of the world with fresh eyes for a while.

The immediate social aim of the documentary photography of the 30's was to inform the country at large about the plight of the poor. But much of it also had a less laudable aim, because of which a certain odium clings to the term "documentary." Much of that photography, like much social protest writing, belongs to the sort of propagandistic art which leads neither to understanding nor to action but to a stagnant emotion, in this case guilt, shame, outrage, indignation. Indignation, even at real and gross injustice, is not inexhaustible aesthetically as it can be morally, and "the victim" is one of realistic art's riskiest subjects just because it so easily leads to simple, stagnant, sympathizing. The issue is confused when it is the poor whom a work of art asks us to feel sorry for, and only feel sorry for; but it is clear how bad a work of art can be which asks us to just feel sorry for, not really to understand, the rich: *Last Year at Marienbad.* It is instructive to observe how the two chief docu-

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mentary photographers of the poor, Lange and Evans, succeed in doing their job. In their best pictures, they inform the viewer accurately and effectively about certain social conditions, but in every case they also do something more, something not so tied to time and place. It is precisely because they do this something more that *that* time and *that* place have endured in their images.

Most of Lange's pictures are of people, and usually the center of interest is a face expressing troubled emotion. Her temptation is to sentimentalize these subjects about whom her feelings are so warm. But in her frequent successes she redeems these pictures from sentimentality by the honesty and the clarity of her seeing. Her vision leads to our warm understanding. The eighth picture in *Land of the Free,* "Pea-pickers in California," centers on a manifestly decent woman whose face is ravaged by immediate worry; her right hand plucks at her cheek, pulling down the right corner of her mouth, which looks as though it wants to be humorous. She is poor, and we assume that her poverty and the uncertainty of the future cause her worry. But the viewer is less concerned with her poverty as such, and far, far less with feeling guilty about the social conditions that imposed poverty upon her, than he is with understanding the profounder, the humanly universal, results of that poverty. For the picture is a sort of anti-Madonna and Child. One sees the backs of two children's heads, one pressed to each of her shoulders, and down in the lower left corner of the picture one sees on her lap part of a sleeping, dirty baby; but the mother, who, we feel without reservation, wants to love and cherish her children, is severed from them by her anxiety even as they lean on her. The second picture in the book, of a "Missouri farmer now a migratory farm laborer in California" crouched at the wheel of a Model-T Ford, is rescued from the too simple, too easy feelings which the spectacle of a trapped victim inspires, by the eyes; they gleam from that weak, fearful, narrow, pitiable face as mindless and heartless as a weasel's.

Evans is not in the least tempted by an excess of sympathy for his subjects. Indeed, more than half the pictures in *American Photographs* have no people in them, and nearly all those in which a face is the central or dominant image are unmistakably of people conscious of "having their picture taken." If they appear sullen, suspicious, truculent, resentful, like the two young men in "Main Street Faces, 1935," or worldly overwise and weary like the befurred woman in "42nd St., 1929," that is because they want to appear so or do not mind appearing so, not because they were caught at it. One never feels with Evans, as one frequently does with Weegee, that he is keyhole-peeping or outright invading people's privacy. Moreover, Evans's photographic technique mitigates against much sympathizing on the viewer's part. He commonly stands in the middle distance from his subject, the snapshot distance; one is seldom aware of effects of light or shadow; it seems always to be a bright, lightly overcast day; he shoots from no special-effects angle; he usually stands square in front of a house or detail of a house; he does not tamper with his negatives. The result of all this is a severe honesty.

EVANS'S TEMPTATION is toward a perverse delight in the hideous. Sometimes this leads him to a certain obviousness. In "Houses and Billboards, Atlanta, 1936," he takes a broadside shot of two long, low billboards advertising movies, one with a picture of *dynamic* Anne Shirley, the other of black-eyed Carole Lombard vamping you over her shoulder, the billboards plastered in front of and below two identical, squalid, and spectacularly ugly houses. Despite this propensity, Evans usually redeems his pictures. A few are plain beautiful. "Maine Pump, 1933" is an elegant image of a domestic detail which itself is elegant. Some are made complex by a comment which rescues them from the merely ugly or ordinary. "Wooden Gothic House, Massachusetts, 1930" is of a house which is neither handsome nor hideous nor so constructed as to make a compositionally strong picture; but referentially the photograph has the power to stick in the mind. The façade of the house has five Greek columns, of which the two to the left are obscured to our view by a tree; on the center column is a large "For Sale" sign, aesthetically as obtrusive in the picture as it was in actuality. We are in no way asked to sympathize with the owner because he needs money; we see an old house casu-

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ally defaced; we see the past discarded. And, in the context of the whole book, we see this earlier failed attempt at elegance rejected by a present ugliness which does not even try to be anything else.

"The whole book"—it is this that constitutes Evans's achievement. The photographs comment on one another. The whole is much greater than the parts added together as separate units. Learning the book, one appreciates how the "yowsa" darkies of the minstrel show posters play off against the lined, experienced face of the Negro coal-dock worker and the melancholy face of the young Arkansas flood refugee. After a while one gains a certain fondness for the curlicue eave decorations which appear on many of the pictured houses. One begins to imagine the view of things which produced, and is produced by, the stark, symmetrical rectangles of "Frame Houses in Virginia, 1936."

Finally, despite its diversity and complexity, the book has a dominant tone, and despite the difference between Evans and Lange his tone is not far from hers. He is disengaged where she is unmistakably involved with her subjects; he turns more toward houses and she toward faces; he is sometimes perversely gleeful over ugliness and she sometimes sentimental over victims. Nevertheless both communicate a sort of nostalgia which one must respect, a sense of valuable things scorned, broken, corrupted, cheapened, thrown away, badly replaced, gone. An emblem for Evans's book would be the photograph with which the first of its two sections concludes, "Louisiana Plantation House, 1935." We are shown two sides of the mansion, each side fronted by square two-story pillars behind which there is a deep porch on both floors. There is no evidence that the house is occupied. There are many indications that it is physically deteriorating. In front of it, breaking up the building's very handsome lines, an uprooted dead tree lies in the yard, dry moss hanging from some of its branches. We know well enough what social conditions produced the wealth to build this house originally and what social conditions were allowing it to decay in 1935. But the photographer does not ask us stagnantly to feel how dreadful slavery was or the Depression is. He assumes our understanding of these matters, and leads us to a new, felt understanding. The strong impression the picture leaves in the viewer's mind is of a high thing fallen.

HABITS OF DESPOTISM

THE ARAB WORLD TODAY. By MORROE BERGER. *Doubleday. 480 pp. $5.95.*

Reviewed by ELIE KEDOURIE

THE ORDINARY READER today sees the Arabs most frequently as part of the underdeveloped world: poor, turbulent, given to *coups d'état*, and perpetually at odds with their Israeli neighbors. They are in short a problem, and problems call for solution. This outlook is very much fostered by the now ineradicable habit of reading daily newspapers, which, as Hegel observed, constitutes in the modern world a substitute for morning prayer; newspapers necessarily stress the here and now, and encourage the eager question, what next? This would be a harmless pastime, were it not that everywhere in the literate world, but particularly in America, an activist professoriate, having managed to raise "current affairs" to the dignity of an academic pursuit, has also proclaimed that it can provide "solutions" to "problems." The world will go its way no doubt, regardless of professors and their "solutions," but the consequence is that their writing on exotic and faraway places, for all its urgency and immediacy, has a wilting and careworn appearance. Compare *Inside Asia Today* with the *Travels* of Marco Polo, and ask why the one still lives while the other was stillborn. It is therefore always a pleasure to welcome and advertise a work with enough leisureliness and authority to persuade the ordinary reader to overcome the itch of immediacy and the illusion of propinquity, and to stand back and survey distant places and alien cultures.

Professor Berger's book does not deal with the evanescent and wearisome politics of the contemporary Middle East. *The Arab World Today* is, rather, quite literally concerned with a world, a manner of living, and a mode of behavior which can be sharply distinguished from others in time and space. This is the author's first claim on our gratitude, that in dealing with an area where political sensation is now the rule, he has eschewed the facile and the sensational. We must also

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be grateful that he deals comprehensively and lucidly with the social and psychological condition of the modern Arabs, a subject usually treated sketchily and unsatisfactorily, and links it—as is seldom done—in a masterly fashion with the political and economic aspects of the Arab world.

Concerned as he is with the Arab world today, Professor Berger is led to give much attention to the Arab world in the past; his view, however, is not the simple and deceptive one that the Arab past serves to explain the Arab present, but rather that past and present are in a relation of mutual influence. He illustrates his point by rightly arguing that if "to understand 'Nasserism' it is helpful to understand traditional Islam and Egyptian and Arab history, it is equally true that a proper assessment of 'Nasserism' will help us to understand the history that was capable of producing it." Studies in English of the contemporary Middle East in the last few decades have usually foundered between the Scylla of current affairs and crash programs and the Charybdis of traditional Orientalism with its philological and theological concerns. Professor Berger's words are refreshing and significant, the more so since he is today responsible for directing the Near Eastern research program at Princeton, and can therefore do something toward giving modern Middle East studies a more solid, less jerry-built appearance.

THE BOOK is divided into three complementary sections, the first dealing with the history and personality of the Muslim Arabs, the second with social, economic, and political institutions and ideologies, while the third considers briefly and trenchantly the phenomena associated with modernization. As this last area is in the throes of social change, caught between a past not completely dead and a future yet unborn, the impression that emerges is of the Middle East as a rather uncomfortable place, where the heavy burden of the past is only matched by misgivings and gloom about the future. The author describes very well the traditional Arab Muslim family and society, in which the authority of the old over the young and of male over female is unquestioned, in which individuality is sternly repressed and respect for hierarchy and power continuously instilled. Professor Berger quotes an Arab sociologist's description of this traditional society as "ruthless, stern, and pitiless. It worships strength and has no compassion for weakness." This repressive social training is accompanied, as the author shows, by minute observance of ritual and punctilio, which have served to canalize and make bearable the insecurity, hostility, and suspicion which were the concomitants of such social arrangements.

Professor Berger observes that today the Arab world is increasingly able to shape its own future, and that what Arabs were yesterday may come to have little relation to what they may become tomorrow. This traditional society, with all its questionable features, is now shaken to the foundations; of this there is no doubt, as also of the fact that nothing as binding or acceptable has replaced it. What can replace it? A society in flux provides great opportunities for innovators and new men, and the newspaper daily confirms that in the Arab world the new men reach for and grasp power with tenacious and eager hands. How do they use it? On private relations and family institutions their impact, though powerful, is neither direct nor immediate. It is rather in the public domains of economics and politics that they conduct their clearing operations and hope to build their new structures. And in this aspect at least they continue the tradition which they claim to supersede; for to demolish and rebuild they have to take ever greater power to themselves and confirm society at large in those feelings of "insecurity, hostility, suspicion, and rivalry" which, according to the author, are the legacy of the traditional order.

The new men plead that they must have power, and unchecked power, because the public domain, whether of economics or of politics, is now derelict and must be reinstated. The sixty pages of the chapter which Professor Berger devotes to economic life and the population problem set out with great skill and sober concision the facts and figures which explain why the Arab world is a rural slum. Can the slum be rehabilitated? This is what the new men hope, and the recipe which they have lately favored is one which they call socialism. This socialism, taken from Western textbooks and inspired by Soviet example, is not understood or even, perhaps, favored by the masses on

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whom it is imposed, but as Professor Berger points out, in the Arab world the masses do not vote: "Consequently the advocates of manipulative socialism can gain official support for their ideas without running the gauntlet of a free and articulate public opinion." The result of attempting economic rehabilitation by this means—which in itself is questionable—is that there is "a vast gulf between the leaders and the led in attitudes and outlook as well as in background and education. This difference is far greater than the corresponding one in the Western democracies, where the high level of living, diffusion of education, and political freedom have narrowed the gap between rulers and ruled." It is easy, Professor Berger goes on to remark, to arouse people by oratory, but very difficult to get them to work hard and efficiently. One powerful way of making people work is to provide them with incentives, to give them a hope that they are working to some purpose. Such incentives are usually provided in capitalism, the most prosperous and most efficient economic system so far known. But such incentives the new men are unwilling to allow. They would solve their economic problems by political means: redistribution of land, penal taxation of wealth, outright confiscation, and "planning." By such means success is problematic, but whatever the outcome, the new men will have anchored more firmly than ever those traditional habits of despotism from which it was their declared aim to save their countrymen.

MANHATTAN MADNESS

MENTAL HEALTH IN THE METROPOLIS, THE MIDTOWN MANHATTAN STUDY (VOLUME I). By LEO SROLE, THOMAS S. LANGNER, STANLEY T. MICHAEL, MARVIN K. OPLER, and THOMAS A. C. RENNIE. *McGraw-Hill. 428 pp. $9.95.*

Reviewed by EDGAR Z. FRIEDENBERG

"THE MIDTOWN INVESTIGATION, beyond any question, was large in focus, goals, strategy, and operational scope," the senior author of this book asserts in his epilogue. So, indeed, it was. Sampling a population of 110,000 residents in a mid-Manhattan district described as a "sociographically well-delineated residential area near the epicenter of New York City's hub borough of Manhattan," the study employed several massive procedures for data collection. If the reader is at all interested in the results of this important and highly publicized research, it is important that he understand these procedures with some precision; because some of the more widely accepted implications of the study depend, I believe, on a partial misunderstanding of its data.

The authors are meticulous enough in cautioning the reader. "The keystone of the entire study was the Home Interview Survey," in which 1,911 residents were selected as a rigorously randomized sample of the 110,000; 1,660 of these were actually interviewed, which is a highly satisfactory proportion in such a study. Demographically, Midtown checks out as virtually identical with the rest of Manhattan, except that very few Negroes and not many Puerto Ricans live there. Like the rest of Manhattan, it contrasts sharply with the other boroughs in having a much smaller proportion of children and a larger proportion of single individuals. And, as the authors literally stress by their italics: "Throughout the volumes of this Study, the data must be evaluated *as a rating of mental health based on the rating psychiatrists' perceptions operating through a questionnaire instrument.*"

This is the heart of the matter. The authors are at some pains—they seem almost obsessive-compulsive—to examine the weaknesses and biases of their procedures honestly. Indeed, it may well be as a case-study in self-conscious research methodology that this book will have its greatest value; the chapters in the prologue on design are as subtle in their self-questioning as the musings of a Dostoevsky character, though Dostoevsky's work enjoys the advantage of translation into excellent English. But more is at issue here than the validity of the questionnaire, or of a process in which mental health is assessed by psychiatrists who have never seen the patient from whom data were gathered. It is true, as the authors note, that the questionnaire procedure, thus applied, precludes any assessment of mental illness in the usual psycho-dynamic terms. But they also commit the authors implicitly to a position as to the *nature* of mental illness and of its social function.

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Under these circumstances, the questionnaire functions as an inventory of symptoms. The symptoms selected *are* valid signs of emotional disturbance even though, by themselves, they reveal very little about its nature. The reader must agree, I think, that the individuals rated as "Impaired" by the instrument doubtless were. There is more doubt, however, about those rated "Well," "Mild," or "Moderate." The mental health of the comparatively well-educated and well-to-do probably shows up on this instrument as better than it actually is, because the language of the questionnaire is essentially one long working-class whine.

The authors of this Study guard very carefully against introducing class bias. They discuss their precautions in detail in Appendix H: among others, "so far as it was practically possible, it was our policy to assign each interviewer to respondents of the SES (socio-economic status) range and ethnic background closest to his family or professional experience." Yet how could even this precaution avail against a questionnaire that asks "stomach upset pretty often," "Felt weak all over," "Bothered by sour stomach several times a week," "One drink is one too many." There seem to have been no questions about piles or getting up nights; there were certainly none about the stock-market, or bad schools, or civil liberties, all of which are good, sound points of crystallization for middle-class anxiety.

SETTLING FOR a working-class frame of reference is usually justified as necessary to yield comparable results: vocabulary and concepts must be limited to what all the respondents can understand. But, on the basis of the much more sophisticated treatment of Hollingshead and Redlich in the New Haven Study, which the authors frequently cite, it seems obvious that the terms —and the symptoms—in which different social classes express their illness are *not* mutually comprehensible. Indeed, this is a major source of difficulty in their efforts to live together.

What the Home Interview Survey primarily observed then, it seems to me, was the tendency for life in Midtown to make people nervous. It does. One of the genuinely comical aspects of the book is the authors' efforts to reconcile their findings to the much lower incidences of mental illness reported in studies of other populations. The authors write as if they assumed that it is the *discrepancy* that must be explained, since their readers could hardly be expected to believe that people in Midtown really *were* sicker. New York, remains, however, a wonderful place to visit.

The most important findings of the Study, and the most stressed, are the positive relations between mental health as here observed and SES; and the negative relation between mental health and age. Nobody could cavil at these findings. In one subway trip out of three, at least, one encounters a poor, old man or woman in obvious distress and often apparently psychotic; the younger and richer, though not always more agreeable, do clearly more frequently have their wits about them. Mr. Srole, in his epilogue, "Sociologist's Sight Lines: Retrospective and Prospective," expresses his compassion for these victims and his insight into the sources of their degradation in the characteristic language of the volume: "In the stigmatize-rejection mechanism here considered pathogenic for its objects, we confront the entire evaluative apparatus of the society's status-allocating system." Who would deny it? *Mental Health in the Metropolis* does not exaggerate the plight of the aged poor in Midtown. Dante himself could not have exaggerated it. But it does, I believe, grossly underestimate the impairment of the "more fortunate."

Partly, the reason lies in the tendency of the questionnaire to enumerate diffuse suspicion and physical symptoms, which are essentially lower-status modes of expressing anxiety. As Hollingshead and Redlich put it: "the class V [lowest] neurotic behaves badly, the IV neurotic aches physically, the class III patient defends fearfully, and the class I–II patient is dissatisfied with himself." The Home Interview Survey would, I believe, respond more sensitively to the symptoms of classes III–V than to classes I and II. But a much more basic source of distortion than any bias in the inventory of items is the fact that it *is* an inventory: that it takes account of symptoms rather than of character and personality.

The most serious consequence of starting with a catalogue of symptoms, is that the authors then perceive mental health as

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wholly normative. Their formal definition of mental health is sound enough, and not normative: Rennie, who guided the Study for four years prior to his untimely death, explicitly conceived mental health in dynamic terms. But the concept drops out in the methodology, and leaves the Study staff studying not mental health, but adjustment.

What is lacking in the work is anything approaching Erich Fromm's conception of a socially-patterned defective character. Socially-patterned defectives don't have symptoms; they *are* symptoms. As long as they are functioning in their accustomed society they are not nervous and they are not seen as inadequate; they succeed. Until thalidomide blew up, Dr. Kelsey almost certainly showed more nervous symptoms than her Food and Drug Administration superiors or the salesmen who were pressuring her. Yet we still believe, with some reason, that integrity is a sign of health, and the strength to maintain it under stress, when the stomach turns sour and the palms sweat, a sign of greatest health of all.

This consideration strikes, I feel, at the plausibility of the authors' central inferences. They emphasize, for example, their disagreement with what they take to be sociology's —as exemplified by Seymour Lipset's—position that social mobility is often both a source and an expression of emotional stress in the form of anxious striving. These authors, on the contrary, find the best mental health among the successfully upward mobile and the poorest among descenders in the social scale. They interpret this observation—undoubtedly correctly—as circular; not only are achievement and promotion soothing and gratifying in themselves; but nervousness, rigidity, and passive hostility are formidable barriers to advancement. Success, certainly, is partly the acting-out of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Confidence leads to success, and the confident are not nervous. But they are not necessarily healthier than the worried.

So the implications drawn by the authors of *Mental Health in the Metropolis* must, I think, be interpreted with reserve. But the work nevertheless remains exceptionally impressive both in its scope and in its methodological rigor. Its most impressive finding —and this one seems unimpeachable—is precisely the one that has received most publicity: the incredibly high rate of impairment in Midtown generally. Eighteen and one-half per cent of the respondents rated as Well, and this is probably an overestimate. Nearly a quarter are grossly impaired, 36 per cent show Mild, and 22 per cent Moderate symptom formation. The cliché, it appears, is right. So marked an evolutionary development must have some adaptive value. You don't have to be crazy to live in New York, but it helps.

CULTURAL LAG

DIAMOND. By BRIAN GLANVILLE. *Farrar, Strauss & Cudahy. 441 pp. $5.50.*
SOL MYERS. By JUDAH STAMPFER. *Macmillan. 215 pp. $3.50.*

Reviewed by JACOB SLOAN

THESE NOVELS ARE lively and readable, though neither the British *Diamond* nor the American *Sol Myers* is unusual in tone or theme. *Diamond* is straightforward social realism with psychological overtones; *Myers* is a member of the *Augie March* family of vigor and wit. To an American, *Diamond* may seem like rather old-fashioned, lightweight stuff. The boisterous attack on middle-class Jewish provinciality is still fun; the book would televise well, TV writing being the prime medium of familiarity, its pleasure that of anticipating and judging clichés. But, unless we are TV agents, we do not read novels for their possibilities as a Play of the Week. And reading *Diamond,* the here-we-go-again-feeling is overpowering: the self-centered wife; the castrated, uncommunicating husband and father; the preferred elder son—sensitive and alienated;

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the neglected, ugly duckling daughter, who ends up by marrying a you know what. . . . Throw in a pinch of anti-Semitism—British boarding-school style—for flavor, bake forty minutes, and the cake is bound to rise.

Luckily, Brian Glanville does not take himself or his indignation too seriously. The morality play does not interfere with the real action of *Diamond*—the sporting life. Glanville seems to have a perfect ear for Anglo-Jewish speech, and each of his characters—good, bad, or indifferent—speaks with a human voice. If the main characters are tediously programmatic, those with the supporting roles have enough energy to keep you reading. You don't much care what happens to Dr. Jack Diamond, sunk in his own mushy, pathetic idealization of his dreary wife. But his gallivanting cousin Mickey—independent, immoral, but incorruptibly male (even to facing the comeuppance of middle age)—displays a nice bit of spirit to set against Dolly Diamond's conventional female death-urge.

Mickey is the sporting man par excellence. Football, the horses—sport is what matters in *Diamond,* for it is really a book about prolonged adolescence. None of the characters ever grows up after twenty. They all remain at home with their families, abroad with their gang. The hot, close atmosphere of Dolly's family still breathes on her neck, while she, in turn, has a suffocating effect on her husband and children. For the men, the thin, sour joys of fraternity linger on. Incessantly reminiscing about the good old days, they observe the active virile life from their seats in the bleachers, yelling, elbowing, pushing, stepping on toes, and having their toes stepped on. The book is full of their hypersensitive remarks about anti-Semitic slights, real or otherwise, that provoke a sudden fight or shove.

What keeps Diamond and his cronies from growing up, from leaving the sidelines and entering English society? If I may sociologize from this side of the ocean, it is the lag of one generation. Certainly, the figures in *Diamond* stand where we stood twenty years ago. I know, the English Jews have been *there* much longer than we have been here. But they have stayed on the outside, and seem to be breaking in only now.

Judah Stampfer's *Sol Myers* proves my point. Like Glanville, Stampfer is a lively writer, a pleasure to read. But where Glanville has reached the halfway house of slickness, Stampfer maintains a rough-hewn, native style. He is a poet while Glanville is still only a journalist. Where Glanville is slack and accommodating, Stampfer keeps his line taut and free. At the same time, Stampfer is confident enough to shun the lures of fancy writing. The writing is lumpy—an apt style for an anti-homogeneity book.

STAMPFER WRITES of the outright mavericks of Jewish society, not the nagged conformists. Yet his two main characters, on whom he focuses during their crazy year at an art school in New York, seem deeper embedded in their respective Faustian and Mephistophelean characters than Glanville's common garden variety of middle-class Jews. Sam Cohen, clumsy, aberrant, outsized, saint-to-be is less strange, because less categorized, than Glanville's untamed shrew. Sol Myers, the I-narrator, is less successful. Myers' observing eye is too close to the author's, leading to some confusion of perspectives. But the book moves gracefully, for Stampfer has a grand sense of anecdote. Particularly memorable are the scenes in a summer children's camp and of the Greenwich Village lesbians. You can smell these milieus.

And yet, as a whole, with all these virtues—the spirit and style as well as a storytelling gift—*Sol Myers* does not come through. The trouble lies in Stampfer's random switching back and forth between a Polish Hasidic background and an American Jewish foreground to show the line which extends from the Old Country to the New, from the religious tradition to the existentialist non-tradition. The Hasidim are Hasidim all right, and Sol Myers and his friends from the street are solid enough—but they never meet in the novel, much less "confront." I suspect Stampfer has too much integrity to impose a connection on reluctant material. He gives us the material, and then seems to suggest that we make the connection ourselves. But it doesn't work.

Here again, we come back to the comparison with Glanville and with Anglo-Jewish society. Stampfer—like Bellow and Malamud before him—can write as though all readers are Jews under the skin. He can write from inside of both worlds without having to explain them; the people in his

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book are a part of life, unlike Glanville's, who are on the outside looking in. And when you write from the inside, there is something interesting you can say, or try to say, and you don't have to worry so much if you fail.

PIECES OF THE HOUR

ROCKING THE BOAT. By GORE VIDAL. *Little, Brown. 300 pp. $5.75.*
THE AGE OF HAPPY PROBLEMS. By HERBERT GOLD. *Dial Press. 236 pp. $4.95.*
A RADICAL'S AMERICA. By HARVEY SWADOS. *Little, Brown. 347 pp. $5.00.*

Reviewed by F. W. DUPEE

KNOWN TO professors as essays, to members of the public as articles, and to writers as pieces, works of the kind collected in these three volumes flourish in the periodicals, big and little, new and old, at the present time. Making us all frenetically magazine-minded, they keep us thumbing through an ever expanding array of publications. When may we expect the piece of the hour in *Organic Gardening,* the indispensable article in the *Yale Review?* And having first enriched the magazine world, many of them achieve a second existence in omnibus volumes such as those at hand. Mr. Vidal's volume is comparatively small. But its acknowledgments page reveals a range of magazine publication which, extending from *Life* to *Zero,* could scarcely be bettered. The ranges of Mr. Gold and Mr. Swados are pretty impressive too. Roughly averaged, they stretch from the *Hudson Review* to *Playboy.*

Of the three, all in some degree novelists by profession, Mr. Gold is the only one who brings to essay writing anything like his full equipment as a writer of novels. Where Mr. Swados and Mr. Vidal compose essays to persuade us of the validity of their ideas, Mr. Gold composes them to show us the meaning of his personal experience.

Neither effort need exclude the other, of course, and *The Age of Happy Problems* contains several essays that advance ideas on manners and conduct. But even in these reflective pieces Mr. Gold draws on memories of dilemmas faced by himself ("Divorce as a Moral Act," "How to Be an Artist's Wife," etc.), and he writes in a style vaguely suggesting the nervous rhythms of dramatic

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monologue. But if he tends, as I think, to extract the sweetest wisdom from the bitterest experiences, this is probably a consequence, not of his novelistic approach but of some unworkable partnership between the two chief aspects of his literary personality. One half of him is trying to be a good citizen, a modest hero of moral "commitment." The other half remains a wanderer in the underworld of disgust and despair, doomed to circle back and back over his past as if no moral problem he has encountered was really capable of solution, no city he has visited was ever really strange, and nothing in life was ever quite finished. God knows we are most of us halved in this way, and Mr. Gold would be an exemplary essayist if only the citizen and the wanderer were franker with each other and could agree on a common style of writing. As it is, they seem to be involved in a process of mutual intimidation, with the result that one of them sounds compulsively miserable, the other primly sentimental. Neither has a good time; and between the partner who goes in for the fanciest of mandarin prose ("Still, we are not blithe spirits; birds we are not,") and the partner who produces the bleakest of gut prose ("good belly luck," "my battery," meaning his creative energy, "forking up eggs," "I ogle the oglers,") the reader himself has a tough time too.

The best pieces in the book are the portraits of cities that Mr. Gold has lived in or visited at some length. His feeling for the modern city and for the oppressed or corrupted lives lived therein is admirable. So is his talent for objective reportage—as long as he sticks to it. But as a rule he doesn't stick to it; the inner moodiness takes over. Read in sequence, his metropolitan studies show a certain monotony of grayness in the emotional weather. Scrutinizing his native Cleveland he observes an "acrid pall" hanging above one section of the city. This pall seems to follow the traveler everywhere, like a bad conscience. It even trails him to Paris, forbidding him so much as a provisional indulgence in the simple pleasures of escapism. "Death in Miami Beach" is the most brilliant performance in the book. A highly wrought essay-parable, it calls upon all the brutality and vulgarity of the Florida resort to testify to its theme: the peculiar grimness of death in a mass society. The theme is urgent and Mr. Gold tracks it down with a fury of irony which seems more urgent still, sometimes inventing horrors that don't exist. A "nude in plaster" glimpsed briefly outside a resort hotel is imagined to be beckoning obscenely to the crowd and saying, "All aboard, you masturbators." I suggest that if the statue is saying anything it is asking humbly that words not be put in its mouth.

Unable to settle their differences, the moralist and the emotionalist in Mr. Gold resort to a kind of obfuscating irony. This irony is the last refuge of the divided soul and it is as familiar today as the divided soul itself is. Considered as a feature of the rhetoric of social criticism, it represents a stock response to the stock properties and catchwords of popular culture. (From soap operas to package deals, the properties and phrases of popculture are just about all accounted for in *The Age of Happy Problems.* Mr. Gold's title itself is a sardonic reference to that culture: he writes that a certain television producer demanded "happy stories about happy people with happy problems.") But the triumph of sentimental irony insures the defeat of social criticism. The sentimental ironist immobilizes himself along with the abuses he is deploring and makes sad war on sitting ducks.

If the chief fault of Mr. Gold's essays is easy ironizing, the *occasional* fault of Mr. Swados's essays is the equally easy rhetoric of sociological expertise. In this, Mr. Swados abuses the peculiar authority enjoyed by criticism today through its alliance—or what many suppose to be its alliance—with the social sciences and their techniques of the poll and the survey. Mr. Swados writes that it is not "accidental that the only civilized TV programs are presented on Sundays when the average viewer is either sleeping it off or visiting relatives. . ." His point is that the television industry, or at least the capitalist spirit embodied in that industry, is deliberately "degrading" the worker (which is what "average viewer" means in the context) by withholding from him its best programs. But Mr. Swados's clairvoyance regarding the worker's Sunday habits only seems to me to visit upon the worker a different kind of degradation. Has the worker no alternative to sleeping it off or visiting

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relatives? Can't he go fishing? Are working class hangovers so much worse than other hangovers that they keep a man in bed all Sunday afternoon and on into the evening, thus depriving him of the civilized programs also available at those times of the day? Has Mr. Swados access to some statistical study that he is so knowing? Probably not. Probably he is only going through the motions of the sociological expert.

His regard for logic is rarely as much in doubt as it is in this instance. And his regard for the worker in society, for the meaning of work in general, gives his book its special authority. A professed socialist, he is not very good as a defender of Marxist theory. The essays written from a dogmatic angle for the party press are stunningly innocent of any serious doubts as to the potential rationality of human society. On most other subjects Mr. Swados is persuasive. He is good when he is contending against the complacent economics of affluence. His proofs that an authentic working class still exists and suffers are definitive. So are his studies in the malaise consequent upon non-working. As a critic of the intellectual life of America today he manages to be impressively monitory without sounding like a common scold. He doesn't cry "No in Thunder" like Leslie Fiedler and Jove. He is especially good in pointing to the historical roots of "anger," "guilt," "sex," and "self-advertisement" considered as literary staples.

"The Cult of Personality" is his phrase for the self-promoters, and it is a pretty dim phrase at that. Any intellectual tendency can be, and usually is, dismissed as a "cult" by somebody; and what is a "culture" but the sum of its "cults"? Mr. Swados's capacity to shape an argument is greater than his capacity to turn a phrase. His words seldom sound as if they belonged to anyone in particular. Perhaps he should join that cult of personality himself. At most he sometimes sounds like a youngish socialist imitating an old socialist who finds himself in polite literary company. "It may be accounted cause for optimism that this play has found an audience"—that sort of thing. But his "Robinson Crusoe—the Man Alone" would be a fine performance in any company. Devoted to demonstrating Defoe's practical humanism, "his ability to normalize the ab-

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normal," the essay also testifies to Mr. Swados's similar humanism and abilities.

MR. VIDAL would probably be the Third Man in any trio of modern American writers. We learn why from *Rocking the Boat,* which, like the other two books, is frequently autobiographical. The writer was exposed as a youth to some wealth and much Washington Senatorial society, and in his guise as an essayist, just as in his social background, there is a mixture—sometimes disturbing, generally engaging—of dazzle and duty.

Vidal's role is that of the free spirit; and through his devotion to writing and to ideas he has made this risky attitude effectively his own, as distinct from merely owing it to the background. Only occasionally does he appear to be under the necessity of reminding a possibly forgetful world of his privileged state. Then he sounds a little like Proust's ducal family, the Guermantes. One of the first-rate things in *Rocking the Boat* is a sketch of President Kennedy done from the life and enriched with personal observation. It is "good journalism" with a touch of Plutarchian stateliness. Quite in the Guermantes spirit, however, is Mr. Vidal's remark apropos the White House: "I am happy to say that I have no influence."

So much for the dazzle; the duty comes out in his attacks on dullness, demagogy, and the injustices done to individuals through the abuse of power by statesmen, literary critics, and cops. Indeed power is Mr. Vidal's chief subject, just as work is Mr. Swados's. The enjoyment of power interests him as much as does the abuse of it, and in several of his best essays he explores the ways in which possessing it or wanting it have modified the fate of individuals from the Twelve Caesars to Senator Goldwater. His friendly essay on Norman Mailer reminds Mr. Mailer that there are some people for whom "the preoccupation with power is a great waste of time."

I don't mean to suggest that power is the sole subject of *Rocking the Boat.* A professed satirist, Mr. Vidal fires away at numerous features of American life and letters. Some (but not all) of his best stuff is satirical; for example, his brilliant critique of the sloganeering use made of love and psychoanalysis on Broadway, or his feud with those writers who have converted the American vernacular into an official literary mode, a "national style." *Rocking the Boat* is even more of a miscellany than *A Radical's America* or *Happy Problems.* It includes things that Mr. Vidal has written over the past ten or twelve years while pursuing his various careers as a novelist, a writer for television, the movies, and the stage, and a candidate for political office. His many subjects are touched upon with sharply varying degrees of thoroughness. The book does nevertheless have, besides the recurring concern with power, a distinct unity of tone. And this tone, one of its great attractions, clearly reflects a certain style of being and doing in the author. It arises from an unusual (in our time) conjunction in him of audacity, wit, and pure if spasmodic intelligence. That boat Mr. Vidal is cheerfully manning is a small-scale ship of state. He is testing its ability to float, not all culture and family too, but only a single, separate, rather exacting person like himself. There are, he plainly implies, *other* free spirits. *Rocking the Boat* is further distinguished by a remarkable literary style: clear, unmannered, lively, at times dazzling but never unmindful of its duty to be prose. He prefers to call the writings in *Rocking the Boat* neither essays nor articles nor pieces but "comments."

BOOK REVIEWERS IN THIS ISSUE

GEORGE P. ELLIOTT is the well-known novelist and essayist. This is his first appearance in COMMENTARY.

ELIE KEDOURIE, a specialist in the Middle East, teaches at the London School of Economics.

EDGAR Z. FRIEDENBERG is associate professor of education at Brooklyn College and the author of *The Vanishing Adolescent.*

JACOB SLOAN'S verse, critical pieces, and translations have appeared often in COMMENTARY.

F. W. DUPEE, professor of English at Columbia, writes frequently on modern literature.

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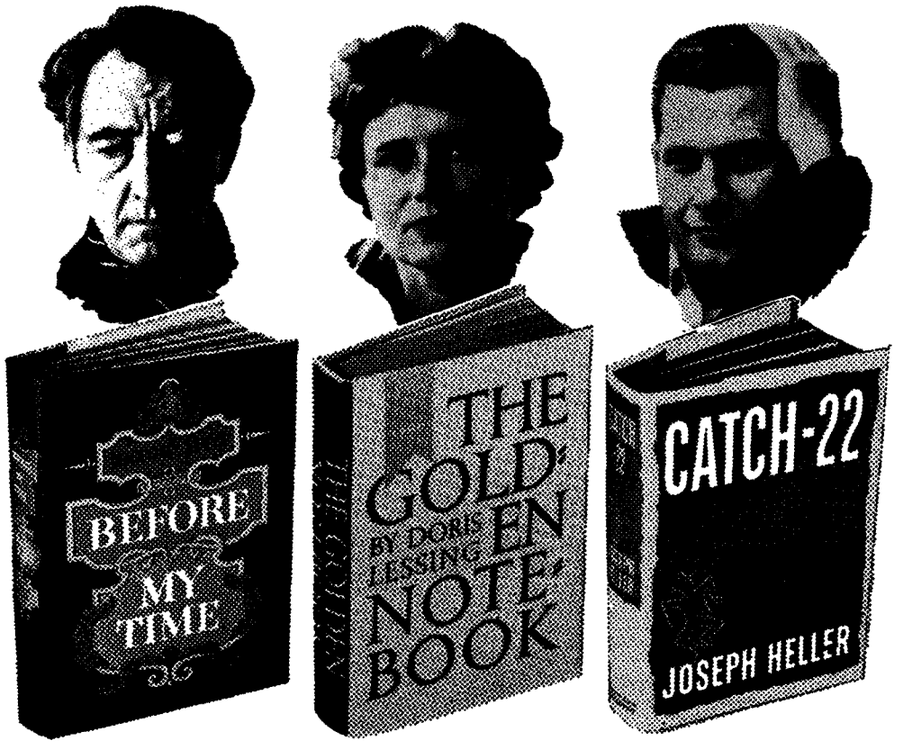

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